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ABSTRACT

Brief prescriptions are offered for the teaching of Afro-American Literature, and specific materials that might be used in conventionally structured high school literature courses are suggested and discussed in relation to the historical periods in which they were created. Following this, a selected reading list of literature by Afro-Americans for the teacher of Grades 7-12 is provided. A high school teacher then presents detailed and specific suggestions about illustrative approaches to materials by and about Afro-Americans. Works that can be used in thematic units for students in junior high school are discussed first, and an approach to one example of each of three kinds of works--a novel, a poem, and an essay--is outlined, this being aimed at high school students. The lessons presented contain a detailed analysis of the three works with suggestions for dealing with the work in the classroom.
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# THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE BY AFRO-AMERICANS

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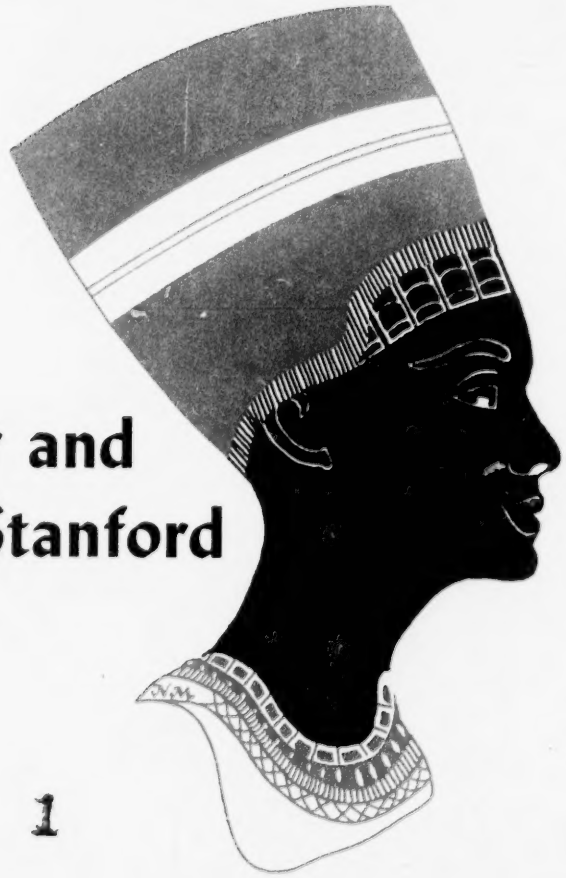

Darwin T. Turner and
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*I am black, but beautiful, O*
*ye daughters of Jerusalem,*
*as the tents of cedar, as the*
*curtains of Solomon.*

Canticle of Canticles 1:4

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# THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE BY AFRO-AMERICANS

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NCTE / ERIC Studies in the Teaching of English

# THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE BY AFRO-AMERICANS

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## FOREWORD TO THE SERIES

The National Center for Educational Research and Development (NCERD—formerly the Bureau of Research) of the United States Office of Education has in recent years considerably expanded its support to basic and applied research in education. It has also made possible and encouraged the dissemination of findings and conclusions. As the body of information derived from research has expanded, however, so has the gap between research and classroom teaching. Recognizing this problem, NCERD has charged ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) to go beyond its initial function of gathering, evaluating, indexing, and disseminating information to a significant new service: information analysis and synthesis.

The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—much informative data, including all federally funded research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of specific educational research are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, NCERD has now directed the separate ERIC Clearinghouses to commission from recognized authorities state-of-the-art papers in specific areas.

Each state-of-the-art paper focuses on a concrete educational need. The paper attempts a comprehensive treatment and qualitative assessment of the published and unpublished material on the topic. The author reviews relevant research, curriculum trends, teaching materials, the judgments of recognized experts in the field, reports and findings from various national committees and commissions. In his analysis he tries to answer the question "Where are we?"; sometimes finds order in apparently disparate approaches; often points in new directions. The knowledge contained in a state-of-the-art paper is a necessary foundation for reviewing existing curricula and planning new beginnings.

NCTE/ERIC, with direction and major substantive assistance from its Advisory Committee, has identified a number of timely and important problem areas in the teaching of English and has commissioned state-of-the-art papers from knowledgeable members of the profession. It is hoped that this series of papers, each subject to review by the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Publications, will provide a place to stand. The next step is the lever.

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, NCTE/ERIC

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# THEORY

## Darwin T. Turner

## Teaching Literature by Afro-Americans

Within recent years, literature by Afro-Americans has become the newest, most exciting, most controversial, and most confusing material in the literary curricula of English departments. On all levels of American education, curriculum committees are busily conceiving new courses in black literature or restructuring existing courses to include examples of that literature. Teachers are devoting Saturdays or summers to institutes, conferences, and courses designed to familiarize them with the literary works and their cultural backgrounds; during the weeks of the academic year, those teachers are struggling to transmit unfamiliar materials to students whose hostility or eagerness has displaced (temporarily, at least) their proverbial studied indifference to literature. Literary historians are traveling to little known libraries in a desperate search for volumes which they cannot find even in the microfilm collection of their own institutions. Critics are happily preparing explications and theories for journals. Anthologists are frantically snipping and pasting for anxious publishers who pray that the interest will continue at least until their volume is ready for the spring sales tour. Private foundations are underwriting black studies programs which include black literature components; federal agencies are allotting funds to subsidize training programs for teachers who wish to use Afro-American subject matter. Professional organizations of teachers of English and American literature are discussing topics and issues focused on Afro-American literature in multiple sessions at annual meetings; many organizations have formed or are forming committees concerned generally with the literature of minority groups in America but specifically with the literature of Afro-Americans. At present, it would seem, Afro-American literature has become a new industry, whose high visibility ironically reminds one that less than two decades ago Ralph Ellison could aptly characterize the Afro-American as an "invisible man."

Much of the attention on the teaching of Afro-American

literature has been directed to the colleges. Such a focus is understandable; for, during the past decade, Afro-American literary materials and courses developed profusely in collegiate curricula before they appeared in the elementary and secondary schools. Furthermore, in the burgeoning black studies programs and in the traditional concentrations, colleges are preparing individuals to assume the responsibility of teaching literature by Afro-Americans. This literature, however, will become an integral part of American education only if it is welded into every level of the educational structure, from "preschool" programs through doctoral programs in American literature. This booklet is intended to assist the movement toward that goal by providing junior and senior high school teachers with a more complete understanding and knowledge of materials, approaches, and issues significant to the teaching of literature by Afro-Americans. Although the high school teacher is the primary audience, it is hoped that the booklet will also prove useful for teachers of freshman and sophomore literature courses in college.

Unfortunately, some teachers still presume literature by Afro-Americans to be merely a weed which sprouted overnight in their carefully cultured garden of classics. Or, even worse, they discount the flowerings of that literature as hallucinations visible only to persons hypnotized by protest, guilt and sentimentality. I do not propose to squander much of the limited space of this book in an attempt to educate such uninformed teachers. Already too much time and energy have been wasted in professional gatherings throughout the nation in unnecessary efforts to justify the academic and aesthetic respectability of literature by Afro-Americans.

Let it suffice to point out that literature by Afro-Americans is not new and that the study and the teaching of that literature are not new. As early as 1746, Lucy Terry, an Afro-American, wrote a poem to recount an attack by Indians. Before 1800 Phillis Wheatley, a slave born in Africa, wrote *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773), and a second African-born American slave produced a two-volume autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Oloudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa* (1789).[1]

Although the study of Afro-American literature is not as old as the material itself, it is not significantly younger than

the formal study of American literature, which has earned academic respectability in this country only within the past eighty years. Two years before the end of the Civil War, William Wells Brown, a former slave, described the achievements of early Afro-American writers in *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements,* and by 1915, the words of black writers were being read, memorized, recited, studied, and revered by black students in the schools into which blacks were segregated. During the 1920's four anthologies of Afro-American poetry, one of drama, and two general collections[2] provided readers with examples of those kinds of works which the editors, in critical introductions, distinguished from earlier Afro-American efforts described by Benjamin Brawley in *The Negro in Literature and Art in the United States.*[3] The spate of anthologies during the Twenties was followed by an almost equally heavy flood of criticism during the Thirties. Vernon Loggins' *The Negro Author* (1931) was merely the first book-length critical history in a decade which also witnessed the publication of Sterling Brown's monumental *Negro Poetry and Drama* (1937) and *The Negro in American Fiction* (1937), Brawley's *The Negro Genius* (1937), and the first book-length critical biography of a black American author, Brawley's *Paul Laurence Dunbar: Poet of His People* (1936).[4] In short, long before some of today's teachers were born, black American literature had been read, taught, and, too often, forgotten.

Even a reminder that the literature has existed and has been taught seems an unnecessary defense of the subject. Anyone who has examined course outlines and college catalogues or who has attended meetings of curricula committees knows that American educators have approved courses narrowly restricted to such literary minutiae as Restoration Comedy or the novels of James Fenimore Cooper. As I have explained in another essay,

> In a discipline which thus continually reaffirms its assumption that any segment of literary heritage is intellectually valid for study in higher education, it is both absurd and hypocritical to raise the question of academic respectability about the study of the literature of an ethnic group composed of people who have been publishing literary works in America for more than 200 years, who have created some of the best-known folktales in America, and who include among

their number such distinguished writers as Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Richard Wright, Gwendolyn Brooks, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, and Le Roi Jones. If anyone has doubts about the respectability of this literature, I urge him merely to read Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of a Slave* or Charles W. Chesnutt's *The Conjure Woman* or Jean Toomer's *Cane* or Robert Hayden's *Selected Poems* or Melvin Tolson's *Rendezvous with America* or *Harlem Gallery* or Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*.[5]

More important than a justification of the teaching of literature by Afro-Americans is a careful re-examination of the reasons for teaching it. Sometimes, I suspect, a teacher of literature needs to remind himself that his reasons for teaching a work are uniquely relevant to a study of literature. Those reasons need not be, and probably should not be, identical with the reasons which govern the approach of a historian or a sociologist or a political scientist. Such a reminder may be especially necessary for the teacher who introduces the literature of Afro-Americans or of any other minority group which has been oppressed and exploited.

Within recent years educators have often pointed to significant psychological and sociological values which result from the use of Afro-American literature in the classroom. Educators have described the need to improve the black child's image of himself by reading works which inform him that Afro-Americans constitute an integral part of America, that their lives and aspirations warrant consideration in the subject matter of the schools, and that their artists deserve to be included in the surveys which introduce students to the creators and disseminators of America's culture. Furthermore, these educators have asserted the importance of teaching literature by blacks in order to inform white students about the interests and abilities of their countrymen, from whom they have been separated by law, by tradition, and by cultural differences.

Certainly, no one should discount such reasons for teaching Afro-American literature. The masses of black people need to develop confidence and pride in their inherent worth as human beings; too many Afro-Americans continue to suffer from the psychological traumas created by restricted existence in a nation which, for three and one-half centuries, has systematically educated black people to feel inferior, non-American, and even non-human. As slaves, they were deprived of the dignity of

being counted as human beings; the laws of the land stated that, when census was taken to determine the Representatives for each state, each slave would be counted as three-fifths of a man. Slaves, and black free men, were taught that their ancestors and their cousins still in Africa were amoral savages who had been cursed by God to be the servants of white men throughout eternity. The slave-holding South harshly repressed any instruction which would refute that dogma, for Southern economy depended upon human laborers who would assume that they had no rights. Even after legalized slavery had been abolished, black people were taught to believe themselves different and inferior. Books, teachers, ministers, and legislators told them that they were too foul, except as servants, to enter a room occupied by a white person; too inept mentally and physically to emulate a white man's artistic, intellectual, and athletic achievements; and too immoral to comprehend the Christian need to oppose the physical temptations of the devil.

Blacks living today cannot forget the legal and illegal segregation which compelled them to use separate facilities in public accommodations. Afro-Americans remember how their countrymen assured the world that blacks could not create art, not even music,[6] and could not compete athletically.[7] Even today educators advise America that black Americans do not or cannot speak English (the primary reason for the excessive and obsessive concern for tolerating a "Negro dialect") and that blacks cannot equal the intellectual ability of whites.[8]

Unfortunately, the present generation, born into a society already formed, shaped, and governed by these beliefs for three centuries, cannot recover from such intensive psychological indoctrination within a few years. Even today many black people continue to echo and affirm many of the derogatory myths which they know to be false and wish to destroy. It will require a generation of systematic education to enable some black Americans to eliminate the psychological insecurities and feelings of inferiority inculcated by formal and informal education in America. Similarly, white students, shamefully educated to believe in their innate racial superiority, will require at least a generation to comprehend that nothing in a pink skin or in the blood circulating beneath it produces superiority. If America is to prevent a destructive division, it must re-educate its people through its schools.

These truths, however, should not imply that the entire burden of re-education depends upon the English teacher. In fact, a major error is the one which presently motivates some English teachers to include Afro-American literature: they assume that one should teach literature by black writers primarily to educate students to awareness of problems of black people. However well-intentioned it may be, this attitude is destructive nonsense. The major justifiable reason for teaching literature by Afro-Americans in *literature* classes is that, as subject matter, it serves any purpose desired by a knowledgeable teacher.

Of course, I know that an unimaginative forty-hour classroom worker probably will not perceive such possibilities. He or she will merely dutifully recite the hackneyed comments about the accepted "Masters" and, by his own disinterest, will persuade students that literature, like formal dress, is a uniform to be donned only on special occasions.

A knowledgeable teacher, however, has a variety of reasons for using particular works. He wishes a student to learn that literature can be enjoyed. He wishes a student to learn that literature is one of the media through which human beings have sought to create beauty. He wishes a student to learn that the various genres of literature are modes through which human beings have sought to express their ideas about life. He wishes a student to observe how language is used to communicate ideas. Whatever his literary or aesthetic purpose may be, a knowledgeable teacher of literature can find works by Afro-American writers to help him achieve his purpose. This should be the motivation behind the teaching of Afro-American literature: the use of a neglected subject matter—in other words, the increase in the material which a teacher may use to achieve his purposes.[9]

If, in the eleventh grade, for example, one is teaching a survey of American literature, there is no difficulty including Afro-American writers. Phillis Wheatley, a teen-aged slave poet in Boston, is sometimes praised as the best American neoclassical poet of the 18th century. *The Appeal,* by David Walker of New York, is as exciting a revolutionary document as anything written by the white militant Tom Paine and far more exciting than the documents and diaries of John Smith and William Bradford. Any course which includes the dialect

verse of James Whitcomb Riley or the local color stories of Mark Twain and Bret Harte certainly can include the work of Paul Laurence Dunbar, a freeborn son of slave parents, who was one of America's three most popular poets at the beginning of the twentieth century. The folk tales of Charles Chesnutt furnish intriguing counterpoint to the better-known "Uncle Remus" tales of Joel Chandler Harris. James Weldon Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912) compares favorably with the realistic novels of William Dean Howells. Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1928) vividly depicts the response of black Americans to the jazz rhythms of the lost generation of Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. In spirit and in style, Countee Cullen, black poet of the Twenties, reminds readers of Edna St. Vincent Millay, A. E. Housman, and the English Cavalier poets of an earlier century. Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1937) resembles, and perhaps surpasses, John Erskine's satires about Helen of Troy and Galahad, written in the same decade. Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938) and *Native Son* (1940) are more powerful indictments of America than John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* or Erskine Caldwell's novels and stories. Willard Motley's *Knock on Any Door* depends upon the garrulous naturalism characteristic of Theodore Dreiser. Frank Yerby, author of more than twenty-five best-selling historical novels, provides whatever readers and teachers expect to secure from Walter Scott, Kenneth Roberts, or James Fenimore Cooper.

The list is seemingly endless, for stylistically and thematically black writers frequently resemble white authors more closely than they resemble their black contemporaries. Aware that their work will be judged by white critics and that their books will be bought by white readers, most have modeled themselves after writers adjudged to be best by the American public.[10]

Despite the ease of discovering material, which is being reprinted widely, a white teacher must consider several cautions before teaching Afro-American literature. Many black people today question whether a white teacher can teach Afro-American literature effectively, even if he wants to. A black person who raises this issue is not necessarily a racist who presumes the inherent inadequacies of white people or who wishes to

deny them freedom to teach according to their interests. More often, he is a conscientious educator who fears that the distorted formal and informal education of the white person has inculcated insurmountable biases which will manifest themselves in teaching. Certainly, white people can learn to teach black literature, but equally certainly, some are teaching it so badly that black people wish that they would stop. Intelligent blacks, however, must attempt to correct the bias and the ignorance of white teachers. Black people represent less than fifteen percent of the population, and they probably represent less than ten percent of the teaching population, especially in a field such as literature, which has offered limited opportunities to blacks. If Afro-American literature is to be taught in all of the schools of America, as it should be, it will obviously be necessary to educate white Americans to at least a minimal competence in the field. With that mission in mind, I wish to offer a few suggestions and cautions for the white instructor who proposes to include Afro-American literature in his class.

First, a few definitions are essential. English teachers know that words are remarkably important. Although words are merely symbols for the ideas and objects they represent, they sometimes attain greater significance than the ideas and objects themselves. This is the paramount consideration about the naming of that group of people torn from their African homes, scattered through the New World, and interbred with various races and nationalities. We have been the nameless among the peoples of the earth. The first generations could identify themselves according to the African nations from which they were taken, even though the slavers did not respect the names. Subsequent generations, however, lost this identity. Separated from their slave parents in childhood, unable to retain awareness of the tribal name of the mother, frequently ignorant of the tribal identity of the father, they knew only the words describing their status or color: "slave" or "free black"; "black," "mulatto," "quadroon"; but most often "nigger." Since emancipation we people have been searching for a name with which we can designate ourselves and command the respect given to the immigrants who trace their ancestry beyond the coasts of the United States. Early in the twentieth century, the most popular name was "colored," chosen not to evade identification with blackness, but to enforce identification with other non-

white peoples of the world. By the middle of the 1930's, however, "Negro" had earned popular recognition among Afro-Americans, who sought respect by insisting that the term be capitalized in accordance with the conventional rules about capitalizing names of races. Thus they completed the transformation of a descriptive adjective into the name of a race. Today, however, many Afro-Americans are rejecting "Negro" as a derogatory name coined by slavers ignorant of the actual identity, just as Columbus and succeeding explorers ignorantly gave the name "Indian" to such people as the Maya, the Aztecs, the Navajos, and the Sioux. Today, many Afro-Americans prefer "black," to emphasize their pride in the traditionally disparaged color. Others use "Afro-American," to indicate the racial blending, or simply "African." Recalling the pride with which the Kennedys have stressed their Irish ancestry or, more recently, Spiro Agnew has boasted of his Greek ancestry, no discerning person can fail to understand a black man's hunger for an ancestral identity. Some insensitive critics, of course, sneer that blacks should call themselves "Afro-European-Americans," since few are not intermingled with Europeans. Because Europeans generally have minimized black people's European ancestry when they wished to exploit or repress blacks, it should not be surprising that blacks today wish to ignore the ancestral ties created by innumerable rapes of African women.

In this booklet, I shall use the terms "Afro-American" and "black" almost interchangeably.

A second term requires definition. That is "Afro-American literature," which I will use loosely to describe all literature produced by Afro-American writers or by black writers of other countries who have become identified with the United States. Readers sometimes wonder whether there is any truly Afro-American literature, that is, a body of literature which is so distinctively Afro-American in character that it can be recognized from internal, textual evidence alone. I believe that such literature does exist and can be identified but that a course limited to such literature would have value for the cultural historian or literary scholar rather than for the general student. The literature which I regard as distinctively Afro-American is that which reproduces characteristics derived from the oral tradition of folktale, depends upon language usage common in or unique to the black community, derives from

and recreates significant aspects of black culture, such as the sermon, utilizes rhythms characteristic of the music composed by blacks, and advances attitudes unique to the black community. Most Afro-American authors have created literature which reflects one or more of these elements; but many of the same writers have also written literature which does not satisfy these criteria—literature patterned, instead, after that which was popular or critically respected in the region of the United States where they were reared. It is unwise, therefore, to echo Robert Bone's implication that, whenever Afro-American writers reflect attitudes and traditions commonly identified with America, they are consciously seeking to escape their racial heritage and identity. Obviously, because formally educated Afro-Americans have studied and been trained to write Anglo-European literature, they are more likely to reproduce that style unconsciously than to reveal an Afro-American heritage. A more important fact, however, is that whether they write in distinctively Afro-American tradition or in an Anglo-European tradition, they have shared the experience of living as black men in America; consequently, a reader who wishes to comprehend fully the thoughts, attitudes, and styles of Afro-Americans must not restrict his examination to their writings in one tradition or another: he must study all of their work.

Let me turn now to specific suggestions about the use of the materials. I do not believe that any English teacher can teach material effectively if he does not like it. The teacher unconsciously communicates his apathy or his aversion and further alienates the student from classroom literature, which the student already suspects to be a device conceived as a means of torture. If a teacher honestly cannot find among works of Afro-American literature some piece which he enjoys reading and respects as literature, then I urge him not to teach any black literature.

Second, after a teacher has selected a work which he enjoys, he must prepare himself as meticulously as if the work had been written by Shakespeare or Milton. Before discussing a poem by John Milton, a conscientious teacher would analyze it several times, study the period of history in which it was composed, examine the life and other work of the author, and read the interpretations given by various critics. Equal care is required for the teaching of a work written by an Afro-American.

One needs a thorough knowledge of the history of Afro-Americans, not merely to understand the topical allusions in many works but even to evaluate the work. For example, in *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) Charles Chesnutt's description of a massacre of blacks may seem melodramatic, if one does not know that the scene represents Chesnutt's horrified reaction to an actual incident in Wilmington, North Carolina. Similarly, one might assume that James Baldwin in *Blues for Mr. Charlie* had exaggerated the callous violence directed towards black people in the South if one did not know that Baldwin based his play on an actual incident in which a fourteen-year-old black youth was tortured and murdered for whistling at a white woman.

A student of Afro-American literature, however, must know more than the topical allusions; he must also be familiar with the attitudes characteristic of black people at various periods during their existence in this country. For example, Gwendolyn Brooks' poem, "Men of careful turns, haters of forks in the road," will be misread by anyone who is unaware of or hostile towards the restlessness of black Americans, who, for centuries, have been frustrated by admonitions to wait patiently for America to improve its treatment of Afro-Americans. The poem is a protest against the exclusion of black people from the banquet which America offers its citizens, but the protest cannot be discerned by those who applaud the attitude which Miss Brooks condemns.

Comprehension of the jargon spoken in the black community is also an important prerequisite for teaching the literature of that community. The need for such knowledge is sometimes unsuspected because the assumption that all American writers use the same variety of English may dissuade a reader from searching for connotations of words which seem familiar. Two examples illustrate the problem. A critic of Afro-American literature once ridiculed Afro-American writers of the late nineteenth century because, in dialogue, they applied the title of "professor" to southern blacks who obviously were not college professors. The critic presumed that the use of the title represented the black authors' attempts to glorify the status of black people. The critic did not know that, well into the twentieth century, both blacks and whites commonly addressed all southern male black teachers as "professor." In many sections

of the South, white men called black men "Professor" or "Reverend" to avoid giving them the respect implied by "Mister." Ironic testament to this fact is that some southern black parents named their male children "Mister" in a desperate effort to insure that they would receive proper respect. The black writers of the time, therefore, were merely reporting language as they knew it to be used in the South. An equally pathetic misinterpretation resulted from a white teacher's failure to understand that "go on a creep" means "to sneak out for an adventure of which society would not approve"—or especially "to sneak out in order to commit adultery." Ignorant of this simple meaning, the teacher called upon her knowledge of psychology and her assumption of the high moral and social motives of black writers to hypothesize that the black protagonist who talks about going on a creep is describing the black man's feeling that his present, restricted action resembles the infant-like motions which are a prelude to walking as a man equal to other Americans.

Readings in the history of black Americans, especially readings in works of authors listed in the back of this section, will provide teachers with a minimal knowledge of the history and the attitudes.[11] Knowledge of the language may be more difficult to acquire, although assistance has been provided by the publication of Clarence Major's *Dictionary of Afro-American Slang* (International Publishers, 1970).[12] Assistance should be sought also from black students and black critics. A teacher must understand, of course, that a black face does not make an individual an authority on black culture; nevertheless, the student or critic who has lived in the black community may provide important insights into meanings of terms and works.

Third, a teacher of an integrated class must remember that the class is integrated. Just as black students may be disgusted with the apparent exclusion of black life from the curriculum, so white students justifiably may complain if it seems that the teacher is overly oriented to black materials. Naturally, a teacher has a right to expect a certain amount of cooperation from students in reading about any people whose stories are included in the teacher's program for the year. But, as teachers are finally listening to black students, so they should at least consider the problem if white students do begin to complain. The worst mistake that a teacher could make at such a point

would be to continue to attempt to cram the materials into the mind of the student with the implication that they are good for him. Such an approach will convince the student that the literature class is being used to teach him matters which he does not wish to learn. More effective answers are possible.

One answer, of course, is alternative readings. This, however, may seem to be an evasion of the issue. A more effective solution may be to analyze the student's complaint. If he is arguing that, as a white student, he is reading too much material about black people while the teacher wishes to continue to introduce him to the culture and talents of black people, it may be wise merely to select works which are less obviously written about black people but which have been written by black people. This approach may have a particularly telling effect on the student who is certain, even before he reads, that he does not want to read anything written by a black man. Using poetry as an example, I, as the teacher, would ask the student and the rest of the class to read poetry by Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Brooks, Arna Bontemps, or Robert Hayden on themes of general interest—love, honor, fear, etc. There is no difficulty finding such poems in any collection of the work of any Afro-American poet. When presenting the poems to the students, I would not identify the authors as black. After I had discovered some poems which proved popular with the class, I would then require the students to read works which the same authors had written about the black experience. This time I would identify the authors but not point out that they had written the works which had been read previously. If the students now felt that the new poems were less poetic or were not worth reading, I would identify the authors as the same who had been judged popular earlier and would ask the students to discuss the reasons for the varying responses to the work.

Still another problem that a teacher must consider in an integrated class is that responses to a work may vary according to the race of the reader. For example, Claude Brown's autobiography, *Manchild in the Promised Land,* is very popular among white students; black students frequently adjudge it too commonplace or too obvious a repetition of the traditional American success story of a poor boy who makes good. I believe that alternative readings provide a justifiable approach to this

problem of varying responses. Readings for white students might be selected primarily according to their strength in enabling the reader to understand the experiences and attitudes of black people. Readings for the black student might be selected primarily for their value in enhancing his concept of himself as an independent human being. Of course, some materials should be required for both white and black students; these should be read and discussed by all the students.

Despite efforts to achieve integration in the schools, many classes—perhaps most—are composed solely of black students or solely of white students. Judging from what I have written in the preceding paragraph, one might suppose that such racial homogeneity would eliminate any difficulty in selecting appropriate readings. Even in such restricted circumstances, however, caution must be exercised.

First, although some books by white authors may provide white students with invaluable insights into the racial situation, such works may not lend themselves to a study of literature. For example, John Griffin's *Black Like Me* may prove to be an invaluable instrument for improving a white student's understanding of Afro-Americans. That is, a white student who has suspected that Afro-Americans have exaggerated their frustrations may respond dramatically to Griffin's description of his feelings as a white American during the time he pretended to be a black American. In this manner, the book may effect an important change in students; nevertheless, the teacher who uses the book should not delude himself that he is teaching Afro-American literature.

Second, a teacher must be careful not to select works which are popular but pernicious. For example, *Soul Sister* earned attention as a feminine counterpart of *Black Like Me.* Unfortunately, the southern-reared author who was accustomed to working among the political leaders of America merely revealed her own psychological limitations; or, I should say, she revealed these limitations to any careful reader who actually knows black people. The author knew none well, except a janitor whose flattery and flirtation she reports in a naive manner indicating her inability to conceive of the possibility that a black man would be other than candid with a white woman who talked with him freely. Ignorant of blacks but righteously armed with the traditional "liberal" stereotypes

and myths, she repeatedly acted in ways atypical of blacks. Whenever blacks themselves performed contrary to the habits which she had postulated for the entire race, she assailed them in her book as individuals excessively concerned with imitating whites. For instance, she presumes that the only way to feel really black is to work as a scrubwoman, to wear one cotton dress and no stockings, and to starve herself. Needless, to say, the picture is totally false. To look at just one part of it, a poor person is likely to be fanatical about clothes. Clothes may be his only means to achieve status that other people can attain through professional position, automobiles, travel, or various luxuries. Almost amusing is the fact that when Afro-American co-workers in an office chide her for dressing sloppily, she presumes their behavior to be evidence of the manner in which they have traded their blackness for the white man's standards. Similarly, when an Afro-American male takes her to dinner, she is disappointed that he takes her to an expensive restaurant rather than to a ghetto restaurant where she can eat "soul food." She spends half of her year of blackness in Harlem and the other half in Mississippi as if she presumes that all Afro-Americans and Afro-American experiences can be defined in these two localities. In Mississippi, she delights herself by integrating the services at a white church; leaving before the end of the services, she announces in a loud voice that she is on her way to integrate another church. Finally, at the end of her experiences, she has reached a psychological state equivalent to that of Gulliver after his return from the land of the Houyhnhnms. Rushing into her apartment, she informs her faithful janitor that she so hates white people that she cannot bear the sight of their faces; therefore, she will remain in seclusion for a few months.

For a black person, the book is the distressing record of a well-intentioned fool who, incapable of transcending her unconscious racism, causes blacks to understand why such black groups as CORE and SNICK stridently insisted that they wanted no further involvement with whites who had gone South to work for the cause. But what of the white teacher and the white student? If they know so few blacks that they cannot perceive the book's fantasies, they may assume that here, as in Griffin's book, they are learning how it feels to be black.

An even better-known example of a pernicious book which a

teacher may adopt innocently is William Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner*. Black scholars of different political philosophies and different temperaments joined voices to denounce the book as a linguistically, philosophically, psychologically, and historically false representation of black people in general and Nat Turner in particular.[13] White critics rejected the rebuttals as emotional or poorly written or envious, and white teachers have continued to assign the work and to praise Styron's picture of the dilemma of the black man. Perhaps the fears and objections of some blacks to having white Americans teach anything about black people can be understood by anyone who considers the implications of the fact that white teachers would continue to endorse Virginia-born and Virginia-reared Styron's testament, "This is the way black people are," while degree-bearing, normally restrained black historians, literary scholars, and educators screamed, " 'Tain't true."

A third and different problem may develop if a white or a middle-class, conservative Afro-American attempts to teach black agitprop drama or black revolutionary poetry to an all-black class. Since these works are black in aesthetics and revolutionary in ideology, many traditionally educated teachers will experience difficulty with them. Struggling for empathy, a teacher may err by trying to force the works into American literary tradition or, at the other extreme of empathy, by exceeding the revolutionary fervor of the author. On the other hand, a teacher may be so offended by the more obvious political ideology that he rejects or overlooks the artistry or the perceptive thought of a Don L. Lee or a Sonia Sanchez.

Another concern which the teacher should focus on when selecting materials for his class is the purpose for which the materials are to be used. I must emphasize again that in a literature class the primary criteria for selecting works should be literary, and the teacher must have sufficient respect for black writers to know that they have produced works capable of satisfying whatever literary criteria are applied. In other words, some teachers may need to be careful to guard against that kind of racism which persuades them that, because black writers cannot be expected to satisfy American standards of writing, nothing written by a black man is worth studying as literature. Such an attitude is not merely nonsense; it is an insult to black writers. If a teacher is to encourage the students

to read the autobiography of Sammy Davis, Jr., or Marian Anderson, for example, the teacher needs to emphasize that the work is being introduced for entertainment or for illustration of the struggle of a particular individual to attain success. The work, however, should not automatically be presumed to have more or less literary value than an autobiography written by Joe Namath or Mickey Mantle. The fact should be obvious, nevertheless, that many well-intentioned teachers seem to stumble as they load their reading lists with the kinds of works which they would not consider if those works had been written by white authors.

Once again, I wish to anticipate the objections of well-read persons who may insist that my statements diverge from the sentiments espoused by some contemporary black critics and authors who insist that artistic excellence is a European concept, that the chief concern of African artists is function, and that, therefore, the sole criterion for studying and evaluating Afro-American literature should be the effectiveness with which it performs the function of educating Afro-Americans to their condition and their needs. Needless to say, I do not agree totally with that argument, just as I do not adopt wholly the other extreme: that literature is worth studying only if it emulates the artistic standards which can be induced from the work of T. S. Eliot or Henry James. Whether created according to a "white" aesthetic or a "black" one, some works are more effective and more "artistic" than others. The challenge for the teacher is not to evaluate the merit of one aesthetic against the other but to provide the students with examples of work which can be considered superior in terms of the particular philosophy which shaped it.

After the preparation and selection, there is still the problem of teaching the work. The major task for the teacher, probably, is to maintain a desirable attitude toward the work. The teacher must be careful not to make it seem that she is to be commended for deciding to teach a work by a black writer. Similarly, the teacher must be careful not to treat the experiences of the black protagonists with excessive sentimentality. The black child has learned that he must harden himself if he is to survive; consequently, he distrusts those who weep about the predicament of the blacks: he has learned that tears often serve as a convenient substitute for action. The black

child wants action to correct injustices, not tears about them.

Having offered these brief prescriptions for the teaching of Afro-American literature, I wish to suggest specific materials which might be used in conventionally structured high school literature courses,[14] and I propose to discuss them in relation to the historical periods in which they were created.

Roughly, a history of Afro-American literature may be divided into five periods—1760-1875; 1880-1914; 1920-1930; 1939 to the present; and 1964 to the present.

The first period—1760-1875—is the least valuable for the high school or college English teacher seeking materials relevant to the conventional literature course. Let me hasten to dispel any inference that I am suggesting that Afro-Americans failed to produce culturally significant work. Quite the contrary. Despite the seemingly insurmountable handicaps of enslavement in a culturally different country which legally and illegally prevented them from learning the culture of the controlling society while it ridiculed and attempted to erase the language and the culture of the African societies from which they had been stolen, Afro-Americans, prior to 1865, edited more than one hundred newspapers, published several volumes of poetry, penned many autobiographies and pamphlets, produced plays, and even wrote novels. Furthermore, their folktales and songs had enriched America by providing what some scholars have described as the only indigenous American song and story.[15] Nevertheless, most of these materials are more significant for the scholar than for the teacher.

For example, Phillis Wheatley is historically important as the first Afro-American to publish a book of poetry (1773) and the second American female to publish a book. Nevertheless, even though she is sometimes praised as the outstanding American neoclassical poet of the eighteenth century, her work will not thrill a high school sophomore. Similarly, the autobiographies of slaves are very important as historical documents and as prototypes for certain kinds of literary works by Afro-Americans; nevertheless, they offer little to the contemporary student unless he is specializing in a study of Afro-American culture. The most important contributions of blacks to American culture during this century-long period lay in folksongs and folktales rather than in literary works by individual authors.

Two books, however, have value. The first, David Walker's

*Appeal,* published originally in 1829 and recently reprinted, is especially significant for those black students who believe that militant protest developed only during the twentieth century. One of the most revolutionary documents in American literature, *Appeal* urges black Americans to rebel against the tyrannical slavocracy. More important for the teacher, however, is the fact that Walker, a revolutionary, encouraged education rather than rejecting it. He insisted that black people must become educated to the point where they stop confusing the pretense of knowledge with the actuality.

A second valuable early work is *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), the autobiography of a man who, during the nineteenth century, was a major fighter for rights for black people. Written to silence those skeptics who doubted that the articulate orator had actually been a slave, *Narrative* remains surprisingly readable and exciting more than a century later. Not as erudite and philosophical as Douglass' later autobiographies, it presents more vividly the picture of young Fred—a bold, handsome, brave, intelligent youth, who swore that no white man would ever whip him again and kept his promise.

A greater number of literary riches can be found in the second period—1880-1914. By this time a generation of free blacks had benefited from formal education. Wanting to be Americans in every sense and believing, almost unanimously, that they would be accepted as soon as they could educate white America to awareness of the virtues of blacks, they undertook this mission.

The first of the generation to win national recognition was Paul Laurence Dunbar. Although he is best remembered for his sentimental or comic dialect poetry, *Complete Poems,* recently reprinted, reminds one that the majority of his verse was written in standard English. Some present-day black students may respond hostilely to Dunbar's dialect poetry because they assume that his characterizations of black people perpetuate derogatory stereotypes created by whites. Dunbar himself felt less sensitive to the possibility because he believed, in his early years at least, that intelligent readers would recognize that his generation was superior to that of the pre-war slaves about whom he wrote. Moreover, as one sees in *Complete Poems,* Dunbar championed his race with poems in standard English

praising Afro-American heroes and non-black benefactors. However, a black student who desires a different image of Dunbar should be guided to *The Strength of Gideon and Other Stories* (1900). Here, one finds surprisingly contemporary stories reflecting Dunbar's bitterness about unjust treatment of blacks in the North, where he had witnessed and had experienced oppression.

A second writer of the period is Charles Waddell Chesnutt, whose works should be better known. Although he wanted to be remembered for satiric and caustic fiction describing the problems of mulattoes, a high school student may be more interested in *The Conjure Woman and Other Stories* (1900), especially if he has been exposed to the Uncle Remus tales. Although the folklore is authentic in the Uncle Remus tales, Joel Chandler Harris concentrated on those kinds of tales which seem charming or sentimental or amusing rather than those which are grotesque or morbid. Furthermore, Harris, a white southerner, created Uncle Remus as an idealized image of that kind of Negro Harris wished to identify as the best of the race.[16] The narrator of Chesnutt's tales, Uncle Julius McAdoo, a black man's creation, is quite different from Uncle Remus. Unlike Remus, who frequently seems to desire merely to entertain or improve his master's young son (and, later, grandson), Julius tells stories only in the hope of benefiting from the idea which he has planted in the minds of the white people to whom he tells the story. For example, in "Po' Sandy" he tells a story about a haunted house with the hope that the white employer, instead of destroying the house, will let Julius use it for his own purposes.

The best known black intellectual of the generation is W. E. B. DuBois, who earned a Ph.D. in history from Harvard. Although DuBois wrote fiction and poetry, his most valuable work for younger readers is *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a collection of essays which perceptively present the spirit and aspirations of black people. A second collection of writings, *Darkwater* (1920), is both interesting and significant; many readers will find it easier than DuBois' earlier volume.

A fourth writer who can interest students is James Weldon Johnson, who, at various times, was a teacher and principal, a lawyer, a songwriter, a consul, a civil rights leader, a poet, and a novelist. Johnson is probably best known as the author

of *God's Trombones* (1927), a collection of poetic folk sermons. This collection includes such well-known poems as "The Creation" and "Death," which are excellent for classroom use. But Johnson's novel, *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912), is equally important. A simply narrated tale of a fair-skinned mulatto who lives as a white person because he despises the hardships of the life of a black person, this interesting novel presents a comprehensive picture of the various strata of Afro-American society at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Except for a few works published quietly and often privately, the decade from 1910 to 1920 represented a recession for the black artist. As Americans—North and South—ignored or rejected black people, the artist was denied opportunity to express his ideas in avenues extending to the general reading public. During the decade after 1920, however, the pattern seemed to be reversed. The black artist was avidly sought by white Americans, who probed black culture and black life for the simplicity, exoticism, and freedom from psychological repression which they felt to be lacking in their own lives. Needless to say, in searching for an ideal, they frequently substituted their own myth for the actual black man. Nevertheless, the interest in black culture, allied with a new confidence of black people—now two generations removed from slavery and inspired by the expanded economic and cultural opportunities granted during World War I—stimulated a decade of artistic production known as the "New Negro Movement" or the "Negro Renaissance" or the "Harlem Renaissance." During the 1920's, many writers felt that they could present all aspects of black life without fear of criticism, and one sees in their works all the themes current in black literature of the 1960's.

In discussing this period and subsequent periods of black literature, I cannot even name, in limited space, all the works which have value for the teacher in a high school or two-year college. Therefore, I shall merely single out those which I like and consider especially useful.

*Harlem Shadows* (1922) is a collection of poems by a West Indian, Claude McKay, who had published two collections of poems before he published his first in the United States. Many of the poems in *Harlem Shadows* are Shakespearean sonnets in which McKay has explored such major themes as the alienation

of the black man, his consciousness of being both African and European, his hatred of oppression and rejection, and his pride in himself and his ancestry. McKay's work is an excellent answer to the young student who believes that, before the Sixties, black Americans were too timid and conciliatory to protest against oppression. McKay's poetry, however, is not limited to racial themes; he also wrote nostalgically of Jamaica and wrote love poetry, often with Marvellian subtlety.

Jean Toomer was probably the most talented writer of the "Renaissance," one whom many critics and editors included among the most promising American writers of that amazing decade which gave birth to Hemingway, O'Neill, Faulkner, and T. S. Eliot. His only available volume is *Cane* (1923), a collection of stories, sketches, and poems about black people of Georgia and Washington. A brilliant, impressionistic, and lyric writer, Toomer should be reserved for the advanced student who is experienced in reading twentieth century poetry and fiction; the less perceptive student may be bewildered.

The most popular black poet of the 1920's was Countee Cullen, whose first book of poems, *Color* (1925), published while he was still a student at New York University, delineates themes of love, pity for the oppressed, and pride in racial heritage. A competent metricist in traditional forms of English verse, Cullen was both a skilled satirist and lyricist. Young when he wrote, he sings effectively the themes significant to youth. The best single volume of Cullen's poetry is *On These I Stand* (1947), a posthumously published anthology. The next best is *Color*.

Two long poems—"The Black Christ" (1929) and "The Medea" (1935)—may offer value for particular students. "The Black Christ" tells the story of Christ's return to sacrifice himself for a black man. In "Medea," Cullen, supposedly offering a new translation of the story, emphasizes the manner in which an African Medea, after betraying her family in order to help Jason, a modern go-getter, is taken to a foreign land, where she is abandoned.

Younger students should be interested in Cullen's *My Lives and How I Lost Them* (1942), a delightful novel about the first eight lives of Christopher Cat, a descendant of a cat who sailed on the ark with Noah. The novel, in fact, can be recommended to any individual who does not consider himself too

sophisticated to enjoy whimsy and sentiment. More "sophisticated" students may be more pleased with Cullen's other novel, *One Way to Heaven* (1932), the story of a marriage between a charming confidence man and a hard-working, strait-laced woman. Scenes in the novel satirize the upper-class black society of Harlem.

Female students need not be neglected—Zora Neale Hurston wrote two novels of special appeal to women. The first, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), is a somewhat idealized story of her parents' attempts to build a life in an all-black town in Florida. A more interesting novel for teen-aged girls is *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), the story of a young woman's search for a love which will permit her to maintain her own individuality. Both male and female readers should enjoy *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1937), a satirical modernization of the Biblical legend, adapted in such a way that the Egyptians become southern whites and the Chosen People are obviously black.

Arna Bontemps is best known today as an anthologist and historian of black literature. No other black writer, however, has written as many novels for children. I have listed several of these on the bibliography; they are marked JF (Juvenile Fiction). Older readers, especially males, will enjoy the drama and excitement and skilled narration of two slave rebellions—*Black Thunder* (1936), the story of an unsuccessful slave revolt in Virginia in 1800, and *Drums at Dusk* (1939), the story of Toussaint l'Ouverture's successful revolt in Haiti.

The most productive writer spawned during the decade was Langston Hughes, possibly the most versatile Afro-American writer who ever lived. He wrote poems, stories, novels, essays, sketches, operas, plays; he edited anthologies; he wrote popular histories of culture.

A high school teacher will find in Hughes' work a wealth of usable material. The early poems, in *The Weary Blues* (1926), for example, illustrate Hughes' attempt to imitate the rhythms of jazz and the styles of the blues in poems focused on themes of pride in the beauty of black people, love for black people, and anger at the injustice and oppression inflicted upon black people. Repeatedly, Hughes urged America to recognize the black man and to accept him as a brother. For three decades, Hughes fought for integration. The last two volumes of Hughes' poetry, *Ask Your Mama* (1961) and *The Panther and the Lash*

(1967), are even more valuable, however, for they reflect the manner in which Hughes shifted his rhythms to those of black music of the Fifties and his thought to that of black people of the Sixties.

The teacher looking for a useful novel can employ Hughes' *Not Without Laughter* (1930) effectively, but Hughes' most significant contribution to literature may be the stories and sketches about Jesse B. Semple, known generally as "Simple." Simple is a black southerner, transplanted to Harlem. Superficially, he seems perilously close to many white authors' stereotypes of blacks; that is, he likes women, drink, gaiety, and soul food. But the stereotype is individualized by the reality of Jesse. He does not love to work, but, since he must work in order to live, he reports regularly and works diligently. He is among the first to be laid off, however, when times are bad. He likes women, but he is neither the sex symbol nor the lustful brute popularized by white writers. In his late thirties, not exceptionally handsome or very wealthy, Simple knows that he will not have women pursuing him wildly. Separated from his wife, he contents himself with Joyce, his middle-class fiancée, and Zarita, who shares an occasional night out. Simple likes to drink, but, because his limited earnings force him to borrow from friends to buy beer when the cost of a beer has been raised to only five cents more per glass, he has little chance to become an alcoholic.

What is important about Jesse is his love for black people and his pride in himself as a black man. In many ways, he typifies the American common man, popularized by many writers and, perhaps, best remembered in the character created by Will Rogers. Although he lacks formal education, Jesse possesses an ample quantity of wit, which enables him to pierce hypocrisy and to raise sharp objections to the discrimination which black people experience in America.

Although some of the sketches seem outdated because they were based on topical issues which have been resolved, Jesse B. Semple is a character who should be known. The most useful single volume is *The Best of Simple* (1961).

The Depression of the Thirties ended the Renaissance of the Twenties. As money disappeared, Harlem and black culture proved to be luxuries which impoverished people could not afford. Furthermore, as economic problems harassed Americans

daily, the disillusionment and dissent—always bubbling beneath the gaiety and optimism of the Twenties—burst to the surface, to condemn the conditions in American life which caused people to starve and die.

At the end of the Thirties Richard Wright appeared. A black man, born in Mississippi and educated to awareness of physical and mental oppression in his early years in the deep South, Wright first gained national recognition with *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), a collection of short stories about black people who are victimized by life in the South: a black youth who is forced to flee a lynch mob because he has killed in self-defense; a black man who is lynched because he has killed a white man in self-defense even though he has risked his life to save the man's family from a flood; a black man who is killed because he avenged his honor after a white salesman had seduced his wife; and a black minister who is tortured by white people who fear that he may encourage poor black people to unite. All of the stories illustrate Wright's thesis that southern blacks are surrounded and engulfed by inescapable violence.

Despite its popularity, Wright was dissatisfied with *Uncle Tom's Children* because he believed that, instead of stimulating action, the stories permitted white readers to relieve their feelings through tears. In his next work, Wright permitted no such relief. *Native Son* (1940), is the story of Bigger Thomas, a teen-aged black youth who accidentally kills his employer's white daughter. Violent, exciting, perhaps too raw to be used below the twelfth year of high school, *Native Son* shocked American readers to awareness of the frustrations and emotions of black ghetto-dwellers more than any earlier novel had succeeded in doing. Such revelations continued in *Black Boy* (1945), the autobiographical description of Wright's early life, a work which many teachers will find more useful than *Native Son* for a classroom unit.

Wright did more than shock white readers. He also alerted critics to the literary capability of black Americans and set standards which black writers were forced to match. Following Wright, in the 1940s, a number of black writers produced work which can be used effectively in high schools.

Older male students who are interested in crime stories will relish those of Chester Himes, who has won an award in France for his detective stories. One of the better known is *Cotton*

*Comes to Harlem* (1965), recently filmed by Hollywood. Students more interested in work with serious social significance will prefer Himes' *The Third Generation* (1954), the story of an Afro-American woman whose snobbery about class and color nearly destroys her family. Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) denounces oppression effectively, but the sexual episodes may bar it from many classrooms.

Female students will be interested in Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946), an effectively narrated, somber novel about a young black woman's unsuccessful effort to rear her son while living in a ghetto. Both females and males should be interested in the many novels of Frank Yerby. Although he is frequently ignored by critics who assume that he has merely written escapist historical romance, Frank Yerby, for more than twenty-five years, has debunked the cherished myths of white American, Anglo-Saxon, and European nations. A black man born, reared, and educated in Augusta, Georgia, Yerby has been especially scathing in his ridicule of the myths of the American South. If some teachers fear that his best-sellers may be too lusty for members of the local school board, they may find more satisfactory material in his early stories, reprinted in several Afro-American anthologies, or in *Bride of Liberty* (1954), which Yerby wrote for his teen-aged children. Written about the years of the rebellion of the American colonies against Great Britain, the novel debunks many myths attached to that period. Although it is historical and was written long before the present decade of riot and rebellion, many of the incidents and attitudes parallel those described in newspapers of 1970.

Still another useful novelist is William Demby. His best-known book, *Beetlecreek* (1950), recently reprinted in paperback, describes black-white relationships in a situation in which an elderly white man constitutes the minority at the edge of a black community.

I must re-emphasize the fact that I cannot include names of all significant Afro-American writers; instead, I am restricting my list to those who may be most useful in secondary schools and in general literature courses in college.

The post-World War II period is also rich in poetry. The best poets are Gwendolyn Brooks, Margaret Walker, Robert Hayden, and Melvin Tolson. Gwendolyn Brooks is widely known as the only Afro-American writer to win a Pulitzer Prize

for poetry. She earned the award for *Annie Allen* (1949), the poetic life story of a black woman. A brilliant poet, Gwendolyn Brooks has demonstrated her technical competence in all forms of verse, from the ancient ballad and sonnet to the new forms of black American poets. *Selected Poems* (1963), is probably the best work for the teacher to use, but a teacher must remember that Gwendolyn Brooks, like many contemporary poets, writes with a complexity that may be difficult for an inexperienced student. An easier volume is *Bronzeville Boys and Girls* (1956), a collection for children. *In the Mecca* (1968) and *Riot* (1970), her latest volumes, should be of special interest to black students.

Margaret Walker, an easier poet to read, has written effectively both in poetry and in fiction. *For My People* (1942), a collection of poems, includes as title poem one which is probably the best love poem which a black author ever wrote for black people. *Jubilee* (1966), a novel, is a credible and persuasive story of black people at the time of the Civil War.

Honored in a festival in Dakar in 1965 for the extraordinary quality of his poetry, Robert Hayden presents many useful works in *Selected Poems* (1966). No other black poet has written so frequently about heroes of black history. Like Brooks, however, he is not an easy poet to read. His most recent volume is *Words in the Mourning Time* (1970).

The most difficult poet is Melvin Tolson, who has been praised highly for expanding poetic language to include the language of the Negro. The works which evoked such acclaim are *Libretto for the Republic of Liberia* (1953) and *Harlem Gallery* (1965), which are taxing, even for students who are widely experienced in reading modern poetry, but *Rendezvous in America* (1944) contains excellent early poems, which less skilled readers may study profitably.

The two best-known writers of the post-World War II period are James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. Widely recognized as one of the most talented essayists writing today, Baldwin has probably been more successful than any other Afro-American essayist since DuBois in communicating thoughts of black people to general readers. Three volumes of Baldwin's essays are available; all are good. Baldwin's first novel, *Go Tell It On The Mountain* (1953), is an interesting and usable story of the religious conversion of a young black boy, but his later

novels describe sexual relationships in detail which may be too explicit for the teachers of students below the college level. Baldwin's plays, especially *Blues for Mr. Charlie* (1964), should not be overlooked by the teacher searching for material which will stimulate black students.

Ralph Ellison, a friend and a contemporary of Richard Wright, has won the highest praise from the literary establishment. In 1964, *Invisible Man* (1952), his only novel to date, was honored as the best American novel of the preceding twenty-five years. It recounts the maturing of a black youth searching for a clear vision of his existence in America.[17] Ellison's only other published book is *Shadow and Act* (1964), a collection of essays about literature, music, and life.

If the task of singling out writers seems complex when one considers the Afro-American writers prior to 1950, it subsequently triples as increasing numbers of Afro-Americans glimpsed opportunities as authors and as increasing numbers of publishers opened the doors to such opportunities. A problem for the teacher wishing to select from the numerous works is that Afro-Americans, like other contemporary authors, have explored the world of sex, drugs, and prostitution in detail and in language which may offend parents who wish to ban from the classroom the world which students have already found in the space between the schoolhouse and their homes. A teacher, therefore, will want to examine several works before making a final selection.

Among contemporary writers of fiction who seem best suited for high school reading, my own preferences are Ronald Fair, Ernest Gaines, Kristin Hunter, William Melvin Kelley, John Killens, Paule Marshall, Julian Mayfield, James McPherson, and John Williams. (In the second section of this booklet, Barbara Dodds Stanford discusses particular works by some of these.) I would hate to be asked to rank these in any order. In my college classes, because time prevents adequate study of all, I arbitrarily revise my list of required reading from term to term, partly to maintain my own interest by examining work which is not so familiar that the responses of the students are tiringly predictable. Of the works which exist in paperback, McPherson's stories in *Hue and Cry* and Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones* may be the best artistically. Gordon Parks' *The Learning Tree* (Harper, 1963) pleases some teachers because

it relates the experiences of a maturing black youth who decides to value justice above race. More mature students, however, sometimes deride the sentimentality and thinly-veiled didacticism which cause the novel to resemble an Afro-American version of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

In addition to Lorraine Hansberry's well-known *A Raisin in the Sun,* excellent dramas are Louis Peterson's *Take a Giant Step* (French, 1964) and Ossie Davis's *Purlie Victorious* (French, 1961). Unfortunately, despite the rapidly increasing numbers of anthologies of Afro-American drama, many usable plays continue to exist only in manuscript form. The oversight continues as editors of anthologies concentrate on plays which are contemporary and designed for the New York professional theater. Some of the earlier plays will appear in my collection, *Black Drama in America: An Anthology,* which was scheduled for publication by Fawcett in October 1971. Older, hard-backed collections and anthologies by Randolph Edmonds and Willis Richardson are listed in my bibliography, *Afro-American Writers.* The plays in these collections were designed for amateur production by students from the elementary grades through college.

Since the middle of the 1960s, a new movement, generated by frustration, has been developed among many black writers. This is sometimes described as the "black arts movement" or "revolutionary art" or the "black-aesthetic movement." The germination of the movement, intended to enforce black pride, must be viewed against the history of the past two decades. To many blacks, the Supreme Court desegregation decision of 1954 seemed, at first, to create the unitary world for which black Americans had worked for almost one hundred years. Within six years, however, it became apparent that little had been gained except token integration in a few schools. Still wanting to attain their rightful place, blacks initiated marches, sit-ins, and various other kinds of demonstrations of protest, which enabled them to gain legal and equal access to some places of amusement, to some restaurants, and to public transportation. Finally, in 1964, Congress passed a law promising the same rights which had been promised by a similar Civil Rights law in 1875 —the right to freedom from discrimination based on race. Simultaneously, however, many blacks had reached a point of believing that the hundred-year struggle was not worth the effort.

Despite the laws, it seemed that white Americans would never recognize black people except on terms restricting them to the back porch of American society. Young blacks then began to define themselves—to abandon the hope of being part of American society and to take pride in their identity as black people, a sentiment effectively articulated in "The Melting Pot," a poem by Dudley Randall, editor of Broadside Press, an organ for many young poets. The national attention given to the "militant" expression of this movement has persuaded some teachers to rush to include their works in courses. It is debatable, however, how effectively the best of the literature can be presented in an integrated class or to white students. The chief writers of black arts—LeRoi Jones, Ed Bullins, Don L. Lee, Sonia Sanchez, Marvin X, Sarah Fabio—do not imitate the black writers who addressed themselves primarily to a white audience; they write to inform and educate black people, and their works should be judged according to the reaction from this audience rather than from the general public. The best-known writers of this period are Jones, Bullins, Lee, and Eldridge Cleaver. Jones' early poetry and prose, written during his pre-revolutionary period, are probably too complex for most high school students; however, his most famous play, *Dutchman* (1964), is certain to evoke discussion in classrooms in which it can be presented. Ed Bullins has been the most productive of the new playwrights, and Don L. Lee is probably the most productive and most promising young black poet. Many students already know Cleaver's *Soul On Ice* (1968), a frequently brilliant collection of essays which can be taught effectively in integrated classes because many of the essays are aimed at white readers.

A word or two must be said about the many anthologies appearing today. Naturally, I am biased in favor of my own; *Black American Literature* (1969), which appears in separate volumes of essays, poems, and fiction, and in a combined volume (1970), which includes drama. Designed for college freshmen and sophomores, these volumes, with headnotes for each author, have become popular among high school students and general readers. The least expensive good, comprehensive anthologies are Abraham Chapman's *Black Voices* (1968) and *On Being Black* (1970), edited by Charles T. Davis and Daniel Walden; and the most scholarly, at the moment, are *Dark*

*Symphony* (1968), edited by James Emanuel and Theodore Gross, and *Cavalcade: Negro American Writing from 1760 to the Present* (1970) by Arthur P. Davis and Saunders Redding. But no one should forget *The Negro Caravan* (1941), which, though outdated, is the best anthology of the literature prior to 1941. Teachers wishing to focus on particular genres or to expose students to the more recent black writers should be interested in Arna Bontemps's *American Negro Poetry* (Hill & Wang, 1963), Robert Hayden's *Kaleidoscope* (1967, poetry), Langston Hughes' *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers* (1967); *Black Fire* (1968), edited by LeRoi Jones and Larry Neale; *The New Black Poetry* (1969), by Clarence Major; *The Poetry of the Negro* (rev., 1970), by Hughes and Bontemps; *New Plays from the Black Theatre* (1970), by Ed Bullins; *Black Arts: An Anthology of Black Creations* (Broadside, 1969), by Alhamsi and Wangara; Adam Miller's *Dices or Black Bones* (1970); Ishmael Reed's *19 Necromancers from Now* (1970), and June Jordan's *Soulscript: Afro-American Poetry* (1970). Within the near future, other valuable anthologies should appear.

Most of the anthologies listed above have been designed for mature readers and for college-level classes. An exception to the pattern is *Voices from the Black Experience: Afro-American and African Literature,* edited by Darwin T. Turner, Jean M. Bright, and Richard Wright. Scheduled for publication by Ginn and Company in fall 1971, this anthology is directed toward junior and senior high school students. Other useful anthologies which include a valuable amount of Afro-American literature but are not restricted to it are the following: *Impressions in Asphalt,* edited by Ruthe T. Sheffey and Eugenia Collier (Scribner's Sons, 1969), which includes literature focused on urban America; *The Black Man and the Promise of America,* edited by Lettie Austin, Lewis Fenderson, and Sophia Nelson (Scott, Foresman, 1970), a thematically-arranged reader of materials by black and non-black writers; and *Speaking for Ourselves,* edited by Lillian Faderman and Barbara Bradshaw (Scott, Foresman, 1969), a collection of readings by authors of various ethnic groups.

The most comprehensive bibliography for the student of Afro-American literature is mine, *Afro-American Writers,* published in 1970 by Appleton-Century-Crofts. The book includes a reasonably complete list of works by Afro-American writers,

selected criticism of the writers, and lists of books on such related subjects as historical, critical, and intellectual backgrounds, journalism, theatre, and folklore. The well-known publications by Charlemae Rollins and Barbara Dodds Stanford are also useful.

As I have stated earlier, it seems ironic that some individuals, who use books by blacks in order to understand the American experience from the point of view of blacks, turn to white writers for interpretation of that literature. Obviously, there is need to give more attention to black critics.[18]

Many publishers are currently exploiting the market by publishing anything which seems related to blacks. Some publishers, however, are serving the public effectively (while pleasing their stockholders) by reprinting older works which were out of print. A few of the better series are those of Arno Press, Mnemosyne Press, Negro Universities Press, and Atheneum Press. The University of Michigan Press is also reprinting works. In addition to publishing new works, the Bobbs-Merrill Company has reprinted individually many essays of criticism.

The wave of new materials easily may drown the individual, new to the field, who does not know what material to rely upon. Lifebuoys are frequently available in the reviews in *Freedomways Magazine, Black World* (formerly *Negro Digest*), the *CLA Journal* (Morgan State College), and *Phylon* (Atlanta University). Committees of the College Language Association, the Modern Language Association, and the National Council of Teachers of English are preparing annotated bibliographies which will evaluate the current publications—both the creative and the critical.

As the wave of interest reaches flood stage, a black scholar cannot help remembering that Americans seemed comparably interested in black culture in the middle of the nineteenth century and in the 1920's. Both times, Americans quickly forgot black people and black culture as they became preoccupied with new interests. One must hope that this time the interest is not a fad generated by sentimentality, guilt complexes, interest in the exotic, or sociological curiosity. This time, perhaps, teachers, students, and general readers realize that Afro-American literature is good literature which illuminates a significant experience of American life and which can be used as effectively as any other literature to educate and to entertain.

## Notes

1. Recently reprinted in *Great Slave Narratives*, ed. by Arna Bontemps (Beacon Press, 1970).

2. Countee Cullen, ed., *Caroling Dusk: An Anthology of Verse by Negro Poets* (Harper-Row, 1927); James Weldon Johnson, ed., *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1925); Newman White and W. C. Jackson, eds., *An Anthology of Verse by American Negroes* (Trinity Press, 1924); Alain Locke, ed., *Four Negro Poets* (Simon and Schuster, 1927); Alain Locke and Montgomery Gregory, eds., *Plays of Negro Life* (Harper-Row, 1927); Charles S. Johnson, ed., *Ebony and Topaz, a Collectanea* (National Urban League, 1927); Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (Boni, 1925).

3. Published originally by Dodd, Mead, *The Negro in Literature and Art* had reached a third edition by 1929.

4. Loggins' *The Negro Author, His Development in America to 1900* was published by Columbia University Press; the books by Brown and Brawley were published by Associates in Negro Folk Education of Washington, D.C. Brown's books have been reprinted by Arno Press and Atheneum Press; Brawley's *The Negro Genius* has been reprinted by Biblio and Tannen of New York City.

5. Darwin T. Turner, "The Teaching of Afro-American Literature," *College English* 31 (April 1970), pp. 666-667.

6. See, for example, the anecdote narrated by James Weldon Johnson in his autobiography *Along This Way* (Viking Press, 1968), p. 196. Many students today cannot believe that anyone ever doubted the musical skill of Afro-Americans, for contemporary society has adopted a counter-stereotype—that all blacks possess innate rhythm and musical talent. Nevertheless, early histories of American music record the scholarly pronouncements that the spirituals were merely poor imitations of European hymns. Even jazz, unquestionably of Afro-American origin, was once credited to such white musicians as Paul Whiteman and the members of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Ironically, the contemporary myth of the innate musical talent of all blacks permits a perpetuation of the fallacy that blacks cannot equal the creativity of whites. That is, as the term is popularly used, "creativity" connotes a conscious production and, in this sense, an intellectual process. As long as it is presumed that black musicians and dancers are merely doing what comes naturally, it can be argued (1) that they lack the intellectual capability required to transform emotional impulse into the highest form of art or (2) that white composers demonstrate superior creative genius by composing great musical works despite their not having the advantage of a natural musical talent.

7. Here also, the present generation of students would be baffled by the convictions of a previous generation. Since the 1950's, black athletes have dominated the superstar list in all sports in which they have been granted reasonable opportunity. Nevertheless, as recently as 1945, there were no known Afro-Americans in professional baseball, football, or basketball. To defend their contention that racial discrimination did not bar anyone from "The Great American Pastime," sportswriters insisted that Afro-Americans lacked the

ability to play major league baseball. Interestingly, in athletics as in music, once the black's achievement has been acknowledged, the achievement is minimized. Today, some writers assert that blacks excel in track, baseball, football, and basketball only because their physical structure enables them to run faster than whites and because their natural rhythm provides the co-ordination which an athlete needs. Simultaneously, however, the writers demean Afro-American (and Afro-Latin American) athletes by implying that they lack the temperament and the intellect to reach their full potential. Supposedly, they are lazy, undisciplined, undependable, and incapable of performing well in "clutch" situations. It is not accidental that, in major league baseball and football, blacks are conspicuously absent from positions assumed to require the ability to lead a team—catcher, quarterback, middle linebacker, center.

8. I do not need to document the frequent allegations that black students (and black teachers and administrators, one must presume) will lower the quality of American education. Interestingly, however, a reader finds few published reports of the fact that, in one school in Los Angeles, the average performance on achievement tests actually rose after the admission of numbers of black students. Amid all the controversy about the cultural bias or the academic necessity of IQ tests, a reader sees no reference to Martin Jenkins' thirty-year-old study of "gifted" Afro-American youths—those who, a generation ago, scored at the level of "genius" on the same kinds of intelligence tests which Afro-Americans supposedly cannot master. (I do not wish to suggest any disagreement with the valid argument that the cultural biases on standardized tests cause them to be unfair and inadequate measures of the intelligence and the potential of the masses of black children imprisoned in northern ghettos or the rural South. Nonetheless, when a nationally prominent personality such as Spiro Agnew simultaneously accepts praise for his IQ score in the 130's and castigates colleges for lowering academic quality by admitting Afro-Americans, I believe that it is very important to point out that Afro-American youths have been achieving IQ scores from 180 to above 200.) Nor does a reader see current reference to Horace Mann Bond's significant studies of the backgrounds of particular Afro-American families, which earned distinction in education and other professions for several generations. What a contemporary reader discovers more readily in professional literature is a mass of pejorative generalizations, fallacious inferences, and half-truths, such as Carl Bereiter's insinuations that Afro-American children cannot think. What Bereiter means, of course, is that the average black child in Bereiter's study lacks the jargon to verbalize in a conventional or expected manner about the abstractions presented by the average teacher. Hence, the teacher, incapable of considering the abstractions except through the jargon, concludes that black children cannot reason abstractly or cannot reason at all.

9. I hope that no one presumes that I am implying that a teacher should teach nothing except such stylistic elements as imagery, structure, or diction. I expect a teacher of literature to guide students to examine plot, themes, setting, and characterization; and I would hope that questions arising from these would lead as a matter of course into a discussion of the actual conditions and people of the time which the author has recreated in fiction. All of these matters are within the province—and are the responsibility—of the well-prepared teacher. What I am contending, instead, is that a teacher of an Afro-American literary work should not become so obsessed with what he considers to be the moral importance or the sociological implications that he fails to examine and evaluate the work as a literary form. Claude McKay, for instance, knew the difference between a poem, an essay, and an angry notation in a diary. Therefore, when McKay has chosen to express his bitterness in a sonnet, a teacher demeans McKay's artistry if he considers only the emotion without also examining McKay's skill in transforming that emotion into a poem.

Occasionally I am astonished by teachers' apparent difficulty in comprehending this relatively simple idea. Perhaps another example will clarify the matter further. A

teacher of history, a teacher of sociology, and a teacher of English may require students to read Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* or *Oliver Twist*; but I would expect each of the three to approach the work in a different way, determined significantly by his overall purposes in the course and by the specialized interest and knowledge he has developed through intensive formal study within a particular academic discipline. I see no reason, therefore, why an English teacher's use of and approach to Richard Wright's *Native Son* should not differ from those of the historian or the sociologist.

The confusion about this matter may merely evidence individual or collective uncertainty about the dimensions of the field of literature. That is, since literature, defined broadly, can include any written work which reveals the art or the intelligence of a creator, a teacher of literature may range far in search of interesting materials. Having found them, he may forget his motivation for the search. The literary work then becomes the field of study rather than the illustration or the tool for that study. Furthermore, most teachers and students would rather discuss ideas superficially than analyze the technical processes of literary craftsmanship. I suspect, however, that two facts intensify the confusion whenever Afro-American literature is used. First, some teachers are including Afro-American works only in response to social demands or social needs. Since they believe Afro-American writing to be inferior as literature, they assume that a literary approach to the material would be useless or, even worse, destructively demonstrative of the incompetence of blacks. Second, too many persons are teaching units of Afro-American literature solely because of what the works say about blacks. Since such teachers actually have sociological, psychological, philosophical, historical, or moral objectives, it is not surprising that they handle these units differently from the other literary units in the course.

A reader may protest that black students insist that the curriculum not only include materials about them and their culture but even focus on interpretations and descriptions made by black authors rather than by white authors. Such insistence implies that blacks themselves are concerned with what is said rather than with the technique which is used. In answer, I can merely return to the statement which I make in the manuscript: an English teacher cannot assume total responsibility for every aspect of the re-education of Americans. I can hope and insist that social scientists teach ideas relevant to black life and history; but no one, other than the teacher of literature, has the responsibility and, in general, the competence to demonstrate that Afro-Americans have written artfully.

As I urge teachers to look at literature as literature, I tread perilously close to that arena in which black writers and critics continue to pummel each other in a controversy about whether an Afro-American writer should have the freedom to write on a subject of his choice or whether he should restrict himself (or be restricted) to a theme or subject which may improve conditions for black Americans. The quarrel is more than a century old and is intensely important to many contemporary black critics and writers. In fact, the issue is fundamental to any significant evaluation of Afro-American literature of the past decade. Nevertheless, the issue need not become a stumbling block in a high school classroom even though some well-read black students may articulate their distaste for a particular author because he has treated a subject which they deem irrelevant to the needs of Afro-Americans or has expressed an ideology different from theirs. In general, the soundest approach for a high school teacher—at least the preliminary approach—should be to evaluate the author in terms of his own purpose. In making such an evaluation, a teacher must take care to avoid the same kind of bias which will divert some students. It would be unsound, for instance, to approve an author merely because he expresses a moderate or traditional point of view and to reject another because he assumes a militant stance.

10. Presently, increasing numbers of black writers and black critics, in such periodicals as *Black World*, *Freedomways*, *Black Theater*, *The Journal of Black Poetry*, and *The*

*Black Scholar,* insist that one use a black aesthetic as the standard for writing and evaluating Afro-American literature. These authorities contend that black writers should derive their style, technique, and vocabulary from the Afro-American culture and should direct their work to Afro-American audiences. This theory presumes that it is, consequently, absurd to evaluate such works according to the traditions of Euro-American literature and the responses of white audiences. The critical argument is valid when applied to particular authors. It is foolish to denounce Langston Hughes for failing to create iambic or trochaic verse when he was seeking instead to reproduce the rhythms of jazz and bebop. Nevertheless, the fact is that, before the 1960's, the majority of black American writers consciously imitated the styles of Euro-Americans and even more consciously wrote for an audience assumed to be predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, urban, and northern.

11. I believe that the most useful and comprehensive bibliography for literary students seeking guides to Afro-American history and culture is the one which I compiled—*Afro-American Writers* (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970). Although the format of the Goldentree Bibliography Series precludes significant annotation, asterisks are used to designate the most important works. Committees of the Modern Language Association of America, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the College Language Association are currently preparing annotated bibliographies. As emphasis is placed upon the importance of securing interpretations from blacks themselves, it becomes increasingly important to identify the cultural and literary historians who are Afro-American. Useful guides are Ernest Kaiser's "The History of Negro History" (*Negro Digest,* XVII, February 1968, pp. 10-15, 64-80) and my own "An Introduction to Afro-American Critics" *Black World,* XIX, July 1970, pp. 54-67; also in *The Black Aesthetic,* ed. by Addison Gayle, Jr.).

12. Despite some technical shortcomings, Major's book was probably the most useful in print in 1970. He has probably exaggerated the number of terms actually coined by Afro-Americans; hence, readers should rely upon the book for meanings of slang used by Afro-Americans rather than for a list of expressions which Afro-Americans have given to the language. Despite Major's indications that some of the definitions were developed or popularized by students in black colleges of the South, the book seems to reflect northern urban slang more than the speech of southern blacks.

Interesting information can also be found in the glossary which Rudolph Fisher appended to his novel, *The Walls of Jericho* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1928). Both in *Jonah's Gourd Vine* and in *Mules and Men* (reprinted by Harper/Perennial, 1970), Zora Neale Hurston explained some of the southern black vernacular which she believed to be especially unfamiliar to her readers.

Recently, an Afro-American principal in Chicago has compiled a glossary which is endorsed by linguists. Although this glossary may appear to be more respectable lexicographically than Major's because it identifies parts of speech, defines terms consistently in reference to particular parts of speech, and lists synonyms, the definitions are neither as complete nor, generally, as accurate—partly because the lexicographer refused to include terms or definitions which she considered vulgar or excessively salacious.

13. See John H. Clarke, ed., *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond* (Beacon Press, 1968). See also Darwin T. Turner, "Styron's *The Confessions of Nat Turner,*" *Journal of Negro History,* LIII (April 1968), pp. 183-186.

14. I shall mention only Afro-American writers. Students already have sufficient opportunity to study the ideas and styles of white Euro-American writers; they now need increased opportunity to examine the work of writers who are not white. Furthermore, most students have been exposed to judgments of black life and culture by those who lived

outside the experience; they need to study the descriptions created by those who have lived within the experience. In the second section of this booklet, however, Barbara Dodds Stanford describes some white-authored works which teachers may use.

I assume that most teachers will integrate the literary materials by blacks into courses which include works by those who are not black. In such a course, I believe that it is a mistake to teach a separate "black" unit. Such an arrangement in an otherwise white-oriented course fosters the belief that literature by Afro-Americans is too different to be considered with "normal" literature.

On the other hand, I believe that there is justification, even on the high school level, for an entire course focused on Afro-American literature in addition to the materials which are included in the other literature courses. I have explained the justification in detail in "The Teaching of Afro-American Literature," (*College English*, April 1970, pp. 667-670). Briefly, the reason is this. In any survey course, it is impossible to include all of the writers who deserve attention. Normally, when a significant writer is omitted, a teacher consoles himself that a student will be exposed to the writer at some point before the student has completed his required years of education. Such a rationalization, however, does not apply to Afro-American authors; it is highly probable that a student's only exposure to such authors will come in a course which a teacher has consciously structured to include Afro-American writers. If Nathaniel Hawthorne cannot be worked into the tenth-grade class, he certainly will appear in the eleventh-grade survey of American literature or has already been read in junior high school. In contrast, if Countee Cullen falls from the eleventh-grade survey as a result of the teacher's understandable desire to expose students to better-known writers of the 1920's, it is highly probable that those students will graduate from high school without having read anything by Cullen. Such an omission is unfortunate, not because Cullen offers aesthetic pleasure which cannot be provided through any other literature, but because the student is deprived of another piece of evidence important to the demolishing of the myth that Afro-Americans cannot create artistic literature or that such creativity has developed only within the past generation.

The American student lives in a society which, for three hundred years, has promulgated the idea that black Africans and their descendents are culturally and intellectually inferior. The only way to repudiate this myth is to amass as much evidence to the contrary as possible. But, if a teacher merely includes two or three black writers since 1940, the doubtful can insist that these few are the exceptions who prove the rule. The requisite re-education must be based upon a study of numbers of writers from the eighteenth century to the present. Such numbers, however, cannot be squeezed into the conventional surveys. Therefore, there is need for separate courses until the myth is permanently interred.

15. In this essay, I shall limit myself to works created by individual authors who can be identified. Some teachers, however, may wish to have students read Afro-American folksongs and folktales, which certainly are as appropriate in any study of literature as English ballads are. Although the spirituals are the best-known examples of Afro-American folksong, I favor such ballads as "John Henry," "Stackalee," and "Frankie and Johnny." Although a strained effort may be made to teach spirituals as lyric poetry, the ballads will seem more appropriate in a conventional literature course in which students study ballads of other ethnic groups. Furthermore, it is important for students to perceive that the heroes of the Afro-American folk have not been confined to the meek and the weak. Like other peoples, Afro-Americans have praised such strong men as John Henry and such bold men as Stackalee.

Folktales can be found in such collections as Richard Dorson's *American Negro Folktales* (Fawcett World Library, 1968) and J. Mason Brewer's *American Negro Folklore*. In addition to providing folktales, Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men* (reprinted by Harper/Perennial, 1970) affords an opportunity for a study of expository narration

and characterization. The most entertaining collection—and the shortest—is Julius Lester's modernized version, *Black Folktales.*

16. See Darwin T. Turner, "Daddy Joel Harris and His Old-Time Darkies," *Southern Literary Journal,* I (December 1968), 20-41.

17. Many teachers automatically use *Invisible Man* because it is the most highly praised novel by an Afro-American. Teachers should consider, however, that the artistic complexity which delights literary critics may baffle or bore students—even black students. Younger students and students inexperienced in literary symbolism may respond more effectively to Richard Wright's "The Man Who Lived Underground" and other stories in Wright's *Eight Men* (World, 1961).

18. See note 11.

## A Selected Reading List of Literature by Afro-Americans for the Teacher of Grades 7-12

For a complete list of literature by Afro-Americans, see Darwin T. Turner, comp., *Afro-American Writers* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970).


Baldwin, James. *Blues for Mr. Charlie.* New York: The Dial Press, 1964. (Drama)

_____. *The Fire Next Time.* New York: The Dial Press, 1963. (Essays)

_____. *Go Tell It on the Mountain.* New York: The Dial Press, 1963. (Novel)

_____. *Nobody Knows My Name.* New York: The Dial Press, 1961. (Essays)

_____. *Notes of a Native Son.* New York: The Dial Press, 1963. (Essays)

Bontemps, Arna. *Black Thunder.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1968 (Orig. publ. by the Macmillan Company, 1936). (Novel)

_____. *Chariot in the Sky.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1951. (JF)*

_____. *Drums at Dusk.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939. (Novel)

_____. *The Fast-Sooner Hound.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1942. (JF)

_____. *Great Slave Narratives.* Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

_____. *Lonesome Boy.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955. (JF)

_____. *Sad Faced Boy.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937. (JF)

_____. *Sam Patch, the High, Wide, and Handsome Jumper.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951. (JF)

_____. *Slappy Hooper, the Wonderful Sign Painter.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946. (JF)

Brooks, Gwendolyn. *Bronzeville Boys and Girls.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1956. (Poetry for children)

_____. *In the Mecca.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968. (Poetry)


* Juvenile Fiction

———. *Riot*. Detroit: Broadside Press, 1969. (Poetry)
———. *Selected Poems*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963.
Brown, Claude. *Manchild in the Promised Land*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965. (Autobiography)
Brown, William Wells. *The Black Man: His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*. New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1969 (Orig. publ. by Hamilton, 1863). (Biography-History)
Chesnutt, Charles W. *The Conjure Woman and Other Stories*. New York: Walker & Company, 1969 (Orig. publ. by Houghton Mifflin Company, 1900).
———. *The Marrow of Tradition*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan press, 1969 (Orig. publ. 1901).
———. *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Colour Line*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968 (Orig. publ. by Houghton Mifflin Company, 1899).
Cleaver, Eldridge. *Soul on Ice*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1968. (Essays)
Cullen, Countee. *Color*. New York: Arno Press, Inc., 1970. (Poetry)
———. *The Lost Zoo*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1940. (Poetry)
———. *My Lives and How I Lost Them*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1942. (Novel)
———. *On These I Stand*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1947. (Poetry)
———. *One Way to Heaven*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1932. (Novel)
Davis, Ossie. *Purlie Victorious*. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1961. (Drama)
Delaney, Samuel. *Captives of the Flame*. New York: Avon Books, 1963. (Science Fiction)
———. *The Tomorrow of Taron*. New York: Avon Books, 1964. (Science Fiction)
Demby, William. *Beetlecreek*. New York: Avon Books, 1969. (Novel)
Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960 (Orig. publ., 1845). (Autobiography)
DuBois, W.E.B. *Darkwater: Voices from within the Veil*. New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1969. (Essays)
———. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Fawcett World Library, 1970. (Essays)
Dunbar, Paul L. *The Best Stories of PLD*. Edited by Benjamin Brawley. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1938.
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Tolson, Melvin. *Rendezvous with America*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1944.

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Brewer, J. Mason. *American Negro Folklore*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, Inc., 1968.

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Bullins, Ed. *New Plays from the Black Theatre*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1969. (Paperback)

Chapman, Abraham, ed. *Black Voices: An Anthology of Afro-American Literature*. New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1968. (Paperback)

Clarke, John Henrik, ed. *American Negro Short Stories*. New York: Hill & Wang, Inc., 1966.

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Hughes, Langston, ed. *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967. (Paperback)

Hughes, Langston, and Bontemps, Arna, eds. *The Poetry of the Negro*. Rev. ed. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970.

Jones, LeRoi, and Neal, Larry, eds. *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing*. New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1968. (Paperback)

Jordan, June, ed. *Soulscript: Afro-American Poetry*. New York: Zenith Books, 1970. (Paperback)

Major, Clarence, ed. *The New Black Poetry*. New York: International Publishing Company, 1969. (Paperback)

Miller, Adam, ed. *Dices or Black Bones: Black Voices of the Seventies.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970. (Paperback)

Reed, Ishmael, ed. *19 Necromancers from Now.* Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1970. (Paperback)

Turner, Darwin T., ed. *Black American Literature: Essays, Fiction, Poetry.* 3 vols. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969.

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Turner, Darwin T., Bright, Jean M., and Wright, Richard. *Voices from the Black Experience: Afro-American and African Literature.* Boston: Ginn and Company, 1971.

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### Collections of Criticism

Gayle, Addison, Jr., ed. *The Black Aesthetic.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970.

_____, ed. *Black Expression: Essays by & about Black Americans in the Creative Arts.* New York: Weybright and Talley, Inc., 1969.

### Reprint Series

Note: Older materials are available in the following reprint series:

African Afro-American Library. New York: Collier.

The American Negro: His History and Literature. New York: Arno Press and The New York Times.

The Basic Afro-American Reprint Library. New York: Johnson Reprint Corp.

The Black Experience in America. New York: Negro Universities Press.

Black Studies Program in Reprint: Literature of the Black Experience. New York: AMS Press.

History and Literature of the Black Man in America. Miami, Florida: Mnemosyne.

Studies in American Negro Life. New York: Atheneum Press.

# PRACTICE

Barbara Dodds Stanford

## Part II: Practice

In the sections which follow, a high school teacher, Barbara Dodds Stanford, has presented detailed and specific suggestions about illustrative approaches to materials by and about Afro-Americans. The author of *Negro Literature for High School Students,* an NCTE publication, Mrs. Stanford has focused in the first section on works which can be used in thematic units for students in the junior high school. Most of her suggestions and questions are those which she has found effective with students at the predominantly black school in St. Louis where she has taught and with the predominantly white students in the school in Boulder, Colorado, where she is currently teaching.

In the second section she has outlined an approach to one example of each of three kinds of works—a novel, a poem, and an essay. These lessons are aimed at high school students who are more mature and more sophisticated in some literary matters than the students for whom the thematic units would be appropriate, and the approaches raise questions occasionally about technical literary matters to remind teachers and readers that Afro-American materials must be considered for literary quality as well as for content. The lessons in the second section contain a detailed analysis of the three works with suggestions for dealing with the work in the classroom.

D.T.T.

## Literature about the Black Experience for Junior High School Students

While some junior high students are mature enough to read adult books, most junior high teachers will find that books written especially for early adolescents will be more successful. Therefore the main emphasis in the lessons suggested in this chapter will be on junior novels, though appropriate adult novels are also mentioned. The focus is on reading materials for grades seven through nine, though many of the books are also appropriate for grades ten through twelve and are especially useful for students with reading problems, and a few of the books could be used in grades five and six.

The qualities of junior novels which make them appealing to early adolescents often cause them to be scorned by English teachers. Characters are not developed in depth, plots are usually contrived, and the ending is usually happy. Obviously, therefore, such books do not deal as honestly with racial problems as do most adult books. Furthermore, there are still far too few good black writers who use this medium: hence, a large percentage of the books are still written by whites. Although some books by white authors are somewhat naive in their presentation of black characters, several of them are very sensitive in probing into the attitudes of their white characters and are therefore very useful for encouraging white students to examine themselves.

The lesson suggestions in this chapter are organized into thematic units dealing with the problems of black people in America:

1. "Bound Bodies, Free Souls": A Unit on Black Heritage
2. "In the White Man's World": A Unit on the Problems of Integration and Prejudice
3. "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud": A Unit on Black Pride
4. "A Dream Deferred": A Unit on Hopelessness and Violence in the Ghetto.

Each thematic unit contains a list of concepts to be devel-

oped in that unit and a list of background materials which the teacher will find useful, including audio-visual aids. The lesson plans include several introductory activities designed to help the students become more aware of their own feelings. The teacher should choose from the suggested activities those that are most appropriate for the needs of his class. The lessons continue with detailed plans for several books which are most appropriate for class study. The unit concludes with suggestions for further reading—a listing of books, stories, and poems which could be used for individual reading or small group work. Several of these books are by white writers, and many are for more mature students. Several questions and a short summary of the books are included; these are for the teacher's use either for discussion or test questions if students are reading independently.

## "Bound Bodies, Free Souls": A Unit on Black Heritage

### Concepts to Develop

1. African nations achieved a high degree of culture, but slaveholders attempted to deprive slaves of their culture.
2. Slaves hated slavery and resented the abuses which were a part of slavery.
3. Both blacks and whites were ensnared by the institution of slavery.

### Resource Materials on Black Heritage


Bennett, Lerone, Jr. *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America, 1619-1964.* Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1962.

David, John P., ed. *The American Negro Reference Book.* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966.

DuBois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk.* New York: Fawcett World Library, 1970.

Franklin, John Hope. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967.

*Life* reprints: "The Origins of Segregation" (Sept. 3, 1956, Reprint No. 46) and "The Bitter Years of Slavery" (Nov. 22, 1968, Reprint No. 61).

Redding, Saunders. *The Lonesome Road: The Story of the Negro in America.* Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958.


### Audio-Visual Materials

*Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed* (Film Associates, 16 mm., 27 min.)

*Chinua Achebe* (NET, 16 mm.)

*Duro Ladipo* (NET, 16 mm.)

*Frederick Douglass* (NBC Profiles in Courage, I.Q., 16 mm.)

*The Glory of Negro History* (Folkways Records, recording)

*Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad* (McGraw-Hill, 16 mm.)

*History of the Negro in America.* Part I: Out of Slavery; Part

II: Civil War and Reconstruction (McGraw-Hill, 16 mm.)
*The Search for Black Identity: Proud Heritage from West Africa* (Guidance Associates, record and filmstrip)
*History of the Negro People.* Part I: Heritage of the Negro; Part II: Free at Last (30 min. each, b&w, Indiana University)
*In Search of a Past* (CBS-TV—Film Associates)
*Onowale: The Child Returns Home* (30 min., b&w, Indiana University)
*Slavery* (30 min., b&w, Indiana University)
*Slavery and Slave Resistance* (20 min., color, N.Y. *Times*—Arno Press)

**Introductory Lessons**

*Lesson I.* Show one of the movies listed above and discuss the effects of slavery in destroying African culture. Or, turn the lights down in the room and play a recording of African tribal folk music. Choose several songs of different types—perhaps a lullaby, a dance, and a work song. Tell the pupils that they are to go on a "fantasy trip" as the record is playing. "Imagine that you are where the music is being played. Try to construct the scene in your mind. What does the land look like? What do the people look like? What are they doing? How do they feel? What happens as the songs change? What do you imagine the people doing in the second song?" Allow sufficient time between questions to enable students to let their imaginations wander. After you have guided their fantasies in this manner, let them share their fantasy trips with their classmates. You might want them to either write a story based on the songs or draw a picture of what they have seen in their imaginations. Encourage them to visualize the people who created this music as people who had the same kinds of feelings and emotions and desires that they themselves have. Do not expect them to present a detailed, accurate picture of African culture. Instead, encourage students to find expressions of emotion that they too have experienced.

If you are going to study *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, present the book now. If you are not having the class read it, you might read it yourself and tell the story to the class.

*Lesson II.* Read the descriptions in *To Be a Slave* of the capture of Africans for the slave trade, or lead the class on another fantasy trip. Play again one of the songs from the previous les-

son and tell students to return to their imaginative speculations. Ask them now to create for themselves an imaginary African family and to imagine their family going to bed at night. Then ask them to imagine the noise of a sudden attack. Imagine their father running outside, grabbing his weapons. Then imagine enemy warriors breaking into the house and dragging the entire family out. "You are dragged along, and when you can see, the next morning, you are miles away from home, with your hands tied to the person in front of you. Soon you come to the ocean and after a few weeks of imprisonment you are herded onto a ship like this." (At this point make all the students get up and herd them into a small space—perhaps under a couple of tables. After they sit there a few minutes, let them return to their seats.) Explain that the slaves were chained into quarters no larger than that. Often they were placed against each other in spoon fashion. Sometimes they were let out on deck once a day for exercise, but often they were left in cramped quarters for days at a time. The journey took three months. "What would it be like to be in a space like that?" Let students think about the question for a few minutes until they begin to realize that the slaves had no toilets, that dead people would stay there for days, and that sick people would vomit over everybody.

Then, in more advanced classes, you might introduce the poem, "Middle Passage" by Robert Hayden. Read the poem aloud with students following silently in their books. After the poem is read, let students react to it spontaneously. Then point out that many of the passages are imagined quotations from people who sailed on the slave ships. Go back and read each of these sections. Ask: "What kind of person seems to be speaking? What is his story? Why are all the quotations from hymns and prayers included? Did the sailors really expect God to bless slave ships?"

If your class is academically talented, you may wish to discuss some of the literary techniques Hayden uses, the structure of the poem, the recurring symbols, the imagery and literary allusions and the way the style reflects the speakers and the events. If you are planning to recommend *Free Souls* or *Slave Mutiny,* you might want to emphasize the Amistad passage in the poem, and perhaps read descriptions of the mutiny from the two books.

*Lesson III.* Play recordings of several spirituals, preferably simple arrangements, not "concert productions." Ask students to describe the feelings of the people who composed these songs. Then read the poem "An Ante-Bellum Sermon" by Paul Laurence Dunbar (there is an excellent recording of it by Sidney Poitier) or read sections from the fourth chapter of *To Be a Slave.* Ask students: "What are the sermons and spirituals saying on the surface? What was the real message? Why couldn't the preachers openly urge the slaves to hope for freedom?"

Now return to the spirituals. Play "Go Down, Moses," "Follow the Drinking Gourd," "If I Had My Way," or "Steal Away to Jesus," and ask students whether they can find the hidden messages in these songs. Explain that some of these songs were signals that agents of the "Underground Railroad," the secret trails that the slaves followed to freedom, used to communicate with the slaves on plantations.

**Books for Class Study**

*Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (Fawcett World Library, 1969).

One of the most outstanding books by a modern African writer, *Things Fall Apart* is very revealing for most American readers. Not only does it demonstrate how cultured and civilized the Ibo of Africa were before the white man came into their land at the beginning of the twentieth century, but it also shows how destructive the arrival of western culture was. Thus, it effectively destroys the myth that Africans were better off for being "civilized" by the whites. While the book does not deal directly with the black man in America, it is very helpful in showing what African culture was like before blacks were brought to America. This book can be used successfully in grades 8-12.

*Things Fall Apart* is the story of a powerful African man who is determined to achieve wealth and power in the community, but who loses everything when the white men restructure African society.

*Discussion Questions*

1. What years are covered by the action of the story? Discuss the African customs described in the book. Can you dis-

tinguish old customs from new ways? (Note that the Fawcett edition has a glossary explaining unfamiliar African terms.) What are the customs for greeting a guest? Let two students act out the kola nut ceremony. What custom did Umuofia have that enabled the people to avoid war? How did a man achieve status in Umuofia? Why do communities need a status system? What is our status system like? Is it more or less fair than Umuofia's?

2. What qualities in Okonkwo were valuable and admired by others? What qualities did he have that made him get into trouble? How did he change during the book?
3. How was the African family system different from ours? How did Okonkwo's three wives get along? What are the advantages and the disadvantages of polygamy?
4. Why did Okonkwo rebel against his father? Why did Nwoye rebel against him? Do you think that children always rebel against their parents? Would there have been anything Okonkwo could have done to make Nwoye more like he wanted him to be? Do parents have a right to decide what their children should be like?
5. Explain the meaning of "agbala," "chi," and "ogbanji." How do you think that these beliefs developed? What other explanation could you give for them?
6. How are the customs of men different from the customs of women? Why did Nwoye prefer the women's stories? How different are the roles of men and women in America? Do you think that men and women should have different roles and customs? How does Uchendu explain the differences between mother and father? Do you agree with him?
7. The book states that "among the Ibo the art of conversation is regarded very highly and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten." Discuss the use of metaphor in this sentence and throughout the book. Find examples of proverbs in the novel. What do they add to the conversation?
8. How had the tribe changed when Okonkwo returned after his exile? What does the title of the book mean?
9. What effects did the coming of the white men have on Umuofia? What customs did the missionaries try to do away with? Do you feel that they should or should not have tried to change the people? Why or why not?

10. Why did Okonkwo kill himself at the end? Trace throughout the book the acts that led to his downfall. Do you think he should have changed and lived as the white men wanted him to?
11. Do any of the customs or traditions resemble those of Afro-Americans?

*The House of Dies Drear* by Virginia Hamilton (The Macmillan Company, 1968).

Guaranteed to chill the blood of any pre-adolescent who loves mysteries, this is an ideal book for fifth through eighth graders. The story is about a black family which moves to Ohio from the South to live in an old house that was an important station on the Underground Railroad. Thomas, the junior high-aged boy, is excited to discover that the old house has a number of secret tunnels and seems to be still haunted by the ghosts of two slaves and the abolitionist who were all murdered there. Thomas and his father solve an exciting mystery and at the same time come to deeply appreciate their heritage and the brave men who died while seeking freedom.

The plot, as is to be expected in a juvenile mystery story, is highly implausible, and, except for Thomas and his father, the characters are fairly one-dimensional. To an adult, the symbolism and foreshadowing are quite exaggerated, but the book is ideal for introducing these literary techniques to an immature reader. Although the book is primarily just a good mystery, it emphasizes several important concepts for the young reader. Thomas's new pride in his heritage emphasizes the strength and courage of the people he learns about, slaves who dared to escape and then to return to rescue others. The book also makes a strong plea for acceptance of all people regardless of race; in fact, students may be puzzled to realize that they cannot identify the race of many of the characters.

*Discussion Questions*

1. Why was Mr. Small anxious to move to Ohio? What indications are there that he was anxious to leave his old home? Why was he so interested in the Civil War? What good does it do to know about the Underground Railroad?
2. What was Thomas's first clue that there was a mystery shrouding the old house? Find all the other clues that he

discovered.

3. Why was Pluto so concerned about preserving the treasure? What did it symbolize to him?
4. What was the Underground Railroad? Why was it important? Why did the old house have so many tunnels? Why was it so dangerous to work on the Underground Railroad? What happened to old Dies Drear?
5. Students may be interested in investigating any historic places around their area that were related to the slaves' search for freedom. Students in the Midwest may be able to find Underground Railroad stations near their town. Students in the West may enjoy reading *The Adventures of the Negro Cowboys* by Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones (Dodd, Mead & Company, 1965).

*Harriet Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad* by Ann Petry (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1955).

Ann Petry's biography of Harriet Tubman is a fine book for grades five through nine. The chapters on Harriet's childhood give an effective picture of what it meant to grow up under slavery. The section on Harriet's life as a leader on the Underground Railroad and as a Union spy is exciting and reveals a great deal about the problems of slavery.

*Discussion Questions*

1. Describe the situation where Harriet was born. What was she called as a child? Why did her parents' friends suggest that she be taught weaving? What does this suggestion show about life during slavery?
2. Who was Denmark Vesey? What happened to his rebellion? What other rebellions did Harriet hear about? How did she feel about them? What do you feel about slave rebellions?
3. What were the things a black slave learned as a child? How old was Harriet when they decided she was big enough to work? Were you considered big enough to work when you were that age? Where did she start work? Why didn't she learn to weave?
4. How was Harriet wounded in the head? Why did she believe that she had killed Brodas? Do you feel she was guilty?

5. Why was it so difficult for slaves to run away? (Remind students of the distance to freedom, the necessity to travel by foot and at night, the lack of food, the reluctance to leave loved ones, the hostility of blacks and whites.) Why did Harriet go back the first time? Why was her husband opposed to her running away? Why did she finally decide to run away? Why did her brothers go back? How did she get in touch with the Underground Railroad?
6. What were some of Harriet's problems after going north? How did she make her first attempt to free others? What was the Fugitive Slave Law?
7. Who was Moses? Why were slaves interested in the Biblical Moses?
8. Describe the problems that Harriet had in leading slaves to freedom. What methods did the slave owners use to catch escaped slaves?
9. Prepare the poems "Harriet Tubman" by Margaret Walker and "Runagate, Runagate" by Robert Hayden as choral readings. Try to create the emotions of the slaves through rhythm and tone of voice.
10. Does the story hold you in suspense? If so, why? If not, why not?

*To Be a Slave* by Julius Lester (Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1968).

*To Be a Slave* is a collection of documents and narratives written by slaves, ex-slaves, and observers of slavery; therefore, it is supplementary material rather than material for literary study. The vivid personal accounts are tied together with explanatory notes by the author. Used as a whole, the book is an exciting narrative covering slavery from the slave boats to emancipation. Used individually, the narratives are an effective addition to other studies of slavery.

*Discussion Questions*

1. What were some of the techniques that were used to capture slaves? How were slaves treated on the trip to America? How can you explain the cruelty of the men who sold slaves?
2. What did it mean to be a slave? What were some of the worst cruelties of slavery? Why did some of the slaves want

to stay in slavery? What did the slaves understand as the purpose of slavery? What would you do if you were captured and sold as a slave?

3. Would you have wanted to be on an auction block? Explain your answer. How did slave traders treat slaves? Why did they break up families in the sales?
4. Describe the plantation. What were the slaves' quarters like? What were the slave homes on Jefferson's and Washington's plantations like? How can you explain the fact that important men like Jefferson and Washington, who fought for freedom, would hold slaves?
5. What religion was preached to the slaves? What did it advise them to do? How did the slaves express their anti-slavery feelings in their songs?
6. How and why did slaveowners try to make slaves work against each other? How did slaves resist this brainwashing? Why were slaves encouraged to have parties and celebrations? Why was singing important to the slaves and to the masters?
7. What fate awaited slaves who escaped from slavery? Why were there not more slave insurrections? Did you know that there were as many as there were? What might slaves have done if they had had weapons?
8. What efforts did the South make to reinstate slavery--in fact, if not in name? What remnants of slavery still exist today?

**Other Books on Black Heritage**

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* by Frederick Douglass (Harvard University Press, 1960).

For students in grades nine through twelve, this is one of the best books about slavery. Written by Douglass only seven years after his escape from slavery, it is written in a simple, moving style. It is an honest and compelling story of a man who became a hero to Afro-Americans because of his continuous efforts to help them achieve the liberty and the justice promised by America.

*Black Mutiny: The Revolt of the Schooner Amistad* by William Owens (United Church Press, 1968).

This biography of Joseph Cinque, an African who captured

the slave ship he was being transported on, is quite detailed and more suitable for high school students. Cinque accidentally sailed to the United States and was the subject of a very important trial, all explained in detail by the author.

*Free Souls* by Mary Dahl (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1969).

A much simpler retelling of the Amistad mutiny, *Free Souls* will be enjoyed by fifth through eighth graders. A twelve-year-old Cuban slave acts as narrator in this book, adding to its appeal for younger readers.

*Jubilee* by Margaret Walker (Alexander) (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966).

This book would primarily appeal to older high school students. It is an excellent novel about a slave girl during slavery and about her life after emancipation. It is a fine literary work which Mrs. Alexander has said is a fictionalized story of her own grandmother.

*Freedom Road* by Howard Fast (Crown Publishers, Inc., 1944).

This is a powerful novel about the attempts of both blacks and whites to build a new world based on equality and education after the Civil War. Refuting the distorted views of Reconstruction given in most textbooks, *Freedom Road* does not minimize the ignorance of the newly-freed slaves, but it does emphasize their sincere desire for education and their efforts to develop the best government they possibly could. It also demonstrates the tragedy of the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. You might wish to have older students compare the picture presented by Fast, a white writer, with that of Margaret Walker, a black writer, to see if they can detect any differences in the attitudes of the writers.

## "In the White Man's Country": A Unit on Prejudice and Integration

### Concepts to Develop

1. When human beings divide themselves into groups, they define their membership in those groups in subtle ways.
2. A black man living in a predominantly white society faces problems much more subtle and more difficult than overt discrimination.
3. A black person in a predominantly white world has a difficult problem of identity in deciding whether to adopt cultural traits of white Americans if that adoption will cause him to lose cultural traits identified with blacks.
4. White people frequently are unaware of the subtle ways in which they make it very difficult for blacks to develop fully and freely in America.
5. Most people have certain preconceptions about people who belong to other social groups or races.
6. Most of our preconceptions are not based on good evidence and often cause us to make foolish judgments.
7. In serious cases prejudice can damage both the person who is prejudiced and the person against whom the prejudice is directed.
8. Most people can learn to be less prejudiced if given the right training.

### Resource Materials on Prejudice and Integration


Allport, Gordon W. *The Nature of Prejudice.* Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958.

Bettelheim, Bruno, and Morris Janowitz. *Social Change and Prejudice.* The Free Press, 1964.

Boyle, Sarah Patton. *The Desegregated Heart: A Virginian's Stand in Time of Transition.* Apollo Editions, Inc., 1966.

*Ebony* Magazine (monthly). Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company.

King, Dr. Martin Luther. *Stride toward Freedom.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958.

Myrdal, Gunnar. *An American Dilemma.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1944.

**Audio-Visual Materials**

*All the Way Home* (Dynamic Films, Inc., 16 mm.)
*A Time for Burning* (Contemporary Films, Inc., 16 mm.)
*Boundary Line* (Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, 16 mm., cartoon)
*Confrontation: Dialogue in Black and White* (NET)
*Everybody's Prejudiced* (McGraw-Hill)
*High Wall* (McGraw-Hill)
*I Wonder Why: A Portrayal of Prejudice* (McGraw-Hill)
*Picture in Your Mind* (International Film Foundation)
*What about Prejudice?* (McGraw-Hill)

**Introductory Lessons**

*Lesson I.* Write on the board names of groups of people which are the targets of prejudice in your community—such as Afro-Americans, Italian-Americans, Catholics, policemen, Polish-Americans, Jews, hippies, hillbillies, etc. Ask students to copy these names across the tops of their papers. Then list a number of both favorable and unfavorable characteristics—such as kind, thoughtful, generous, stingy, loud, lazy, clannish, etc. Ask students to list under each group the words that they associate with that group, supplying any characteristics that they wish to use that were not listed on the board.

Then ask students to write a paragraph about the group for which they listed the most unfavorable characteristics. They must give specific examples of people they know who belong to that group and who possess all the characteristics they have listed for the group. Then they are to write a second paragraph giving examples of people who belong to the group but do not possess those characteristics.

*Lesson II.* Instruct your students to stand up and to walk around the room without speaking, looking at the other students carefully. After a few moments, tell them to divide themselves into groups of four without speaking to anyone. "When the four of you are satisfied that this is the group you feel most comfortable with, sit down together."

After all groups are settled, ask students to look around and

think about the groups that have formed. "Ask yourself whether you really feel a part of the group you are in. If you do not, you may change places so that everyone will be with a group he feels a part of. If anyone feels that he does not really belong with any group in the classroom—that his friends are all outside this class—he may work alone."

Instruct each group to discuss among themselves the things that give their group an identity—why they feel more comfortable with their group than with any of the others. Ask them to write down a list of clues about what makes a person fit into their group. Suggest several headings. "How would a person who fits into your group dress? What things would he not wear? What kinds of music would he listen to? What music would he not like? What kinds of activities would he be interested in? What standards of behavior would he follow? What things would he not do?"

Then call the class back together. Discuss some of the ways the groups use to define themselves. "Why do people form groups? If a new person came to school who did not fit any of the criteria for your group but kept trying to hang around you, what would you do? Would he have to change himself to join your group?" Discuss the concept of "in-group" jokes, talk, etc. What is the purpose of talking about things that only members of the group understand?

*Lesson III.* Radio stations frequently develop a sort of "in-group" atmosphere. For homework, assign students to listen to a radio station that is aimed at a group most of your students have little association with—or if you have a very heterogeneous group, assign them to listen to each other's favorite radio station. Discuss with the class ahead of time whether there is a radio station that appeals primarily to blacks, to Spanish-Americans, to hippies, to teen-agers generally, to country-western fans, etc. Assign students to write down all examples they can find of "in-group" talk—the music, slang, contests or advice programs, ideas that bind together the people who listen to that radio station.

The next day discuss the findings of the students about the "in-group" aspects of the radio programs. Discuss what changes in themselves they would have to make to become a member of the in-group that listens to that station.

*Lesson IV.* (This lesson is primarily for white students who have had little experience with blacks.) Plan a field trip to some public place—a concert, church, shopping area, etc., where members of another race predominate. Try to split students up so they cannot feel the security of their own group. After the experience, discuss how they felt. Were they uneasy? Did they feel left out and socially unsure of themselves? If they felt secure, why did they? Discuss carefully the reasons for these feelings.

*Lesson V.* Ask students to complete the following story as if it had happened to them. (If the class is predominantly black, revise the story to have them becoming white.)

> One morning I woke up just as on any other morning. I sleepily struggled out of bed and went to the bathroom. As I brushed my teeth, I casually glanced in the mirror and then stared in shock. The face that was reflected in the mirror was dark brown and my hair was black. (Continue the story showing encounters with everyone you would meet in an ordinary school day. No one else has changed in any way.)

**Books for Class Study**

*To Sir With Love* by E. R. Braithwaite (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960).

This is the semi-autobiographical story of a black man who accepts a job teaching in the slums of London when he cannot find a job as an engineer. Coming from a quite refined background, Mr. Braithwaite is shocked by the vulgarity and crudeness of his students. He is determined to teach them to respect him and themselves. While he has little racial difficulty at the school, he does have some problems when he falls in love with a white fellow-teacher, Gillian.

Because they can identify both with the reluctant students and their pranks and with the teacher and his strong ideals, most students enjoy *To Sir With Love.*

*Discussion Questions*

1. Why did Braithwaite consider himself British instead of African? What did the British way of life consist of? How was prejudice in Britain different from prejudice in America? Is one worse than the other?

2. How did Braithwaite's bitterness about not getting a job spread to other attitudes? How did the old man break down Braithwaite's defenses in order to tell him about the job? Did Britain injure itself by not letting Braithwaite work in the position for which he was trained?
3. How did Mr. Braithwaite react to the students? What things about them irritated him? Did he feel superior to them? Was he? Were the students prejudiced against him because of his color? Why did they continue to ask silly questions about his race? Why did Pamela become so irritated by them?
4. Explain the incident at the Poisson D'Or. Why did Gillian become angry? What did she want Rick to do? Why didn't he fight back? Is a fight the best way to answer an insult?
5. Do you think that Rick and Gillian made the right decision? Do you feel that they will suffer a lot from prejudice? How do you think their children will be treated? How did Gillian's parents react?
6. Is Braithwaite's story typical? Would it be likely to happen to a black youth in an American community?

*South Town* by Lorenz Graham (Follett Publishing Co., 1958).

A popular junior novel, *South Town* is the story of a black boy and his family who suffer discrimination in the South. David and his family are in constant conflict with the white community because they demand the right to be treated like anyone else. Eventually they decide that they will have to move to the North to gain the opportunities they seek. Definitely a junior novel, *South Town* has oversimplified characters and slightly stilted conversation, but its appeal to junior high readers is unmistakable, for it has a lot of action, a swift-moving plot, and a valuable theme.

*Discussion Questions*

1. Describe each of the members of the Williams family. What qualities does each of the parents try to instill in his children? What are their strong points? What are their weak points? Do the members of the family seem realistic? Could they be real people?
2. How are black people discriminated against in South Town? Why didn't the school board want the school painted? What effect would painting the school have on blacks in the town?

3. Why did David's father work out of town? Why did he demand higher wages when he got a local job? Why was the community so upset?
4. Why did Travis decide to stay and help the Williams family? Do you think that it is likely that a white man would help a black family fight?
5. Why did the Williams family decide to move north? Do you feel that they were giving up or deserting their friends? What would you have done in their place?

*North Town* by Lorenz Graham (Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1965).

A sequel to *South Town, North Town* takes place after David and his family move to the North. David has problems adjusting to an integrated high school; he particularly has trouble knowing how much he can trust the white students. Both white and black students take advantage of his ignorance of city ways, but both also help him to succeed.

*North Town* seems much more contemporary than *South Town,* for problems in northern schools have changed much less than those in southern schools. Characters also seem less one-dimensional. In *South Town* David was almost too good to be true, but in *North Town* he makes a number of very human mistakes.

*Discussion Questions*

1. What were David's fears as he entered the school? Which were justified? Did he deserve any of the trouble he got into—particularly in football? How did Jimmy and Alonzo say he would be treated? Were they correct?
2. What social distinctions were there among the blacks in North Town? Why did Jimmy and Alonzo dislike Buck Taylor? Was it necessary for Buck to flatter whites and be subservient in order to get ahead?
3. Why was David loyal to Head and Hap even though he knew that they had broken the law? Was David disloyal to his race in being friends with Mike and going out for football? Why did Mr. Critchfield become so angry about David's trying to help Mike get a job? To whom does a person owe loyalty?
4. What were the causes of the friction between blacks and whites in North Town? Do any of these problems exist in

your school? What could be done to solve these problems?

**Other Books on Problems of Prejudice and Integration**

*Hey, White Girl* by Susan Gregory (W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1970).

This is the autobiography of a white girl who decides to attend an all-black school in Chicago. Susan discusses both the problems and the pleasures of her situation with apparent honesty.

*Edgar Allen* by John Neufeld (New American Library, 1969).

A white family decides to adopt a black child and finds itself facing a serious crisis. Members of the community are openly hostile, and one group even burns a cross on the lawn. The oldest daughter feels that her social life will be hindered by having a Negro brother and shows her resentment strongly. The family finally decides to give up the child but then is faced by guilt feelings. The short, easy-to-read book raises a lot of questions about where a person's loyalties should lie in a question of conscience and demonstrates that moral decisions are never easy.

*Anything for a Friend* by Russell F. Davis (Bantam Books, Inc., 1963).

The cruelty that can result from white students working for integration for their own prestige, not because they like black students, is the subject of this book. Arabella tricks Clarence, a white boy, into inviting a black girl to the prom. But when Clarence and Sally begin to like each other seriously, Arabella deserts them to go after another cause.

*Mary Jane* by Dorothy Sterling (Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959).

A book about integration problems for fifth through seventh graders, *Mary Jane* is the story of a seventh grade girl who is the first black girl to attend her school. The book shows her loneliness and puzzlement as she fails to make friends at her new school, but finds that her old friends are unwilling to have much to do with her. Gradually, however, perhaps more quickly than is usual in reality, the class comes to accept her and finally to value her special contributions.

*Julie's Heritage* by Catherine Marshall (David McKay Company, Inc., 1957).

Catherine Marshall's story of Julie demonstrates powerfully the subtle ways in which the students of an ordinary white high school discriminate against black students. There are few instances of open hostility, but Julie is hurt by the subtle snubs and thoughtless comments. This is a book which encourages white students to examine their own attitudes more carefully and helps black students explore their reactions to subtle forms of discrimination.

*In the Heat of the Night* by John Ball (Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965).

This is an exciting mystery novel with good insights into the problems of prejudice. The white characters represent a wide range of attitudes, from Endicott, who displays little prejudice, to Sam Wood, who is prejudiced because he has been taught that way but is willing to change as he gains new experience, to Gillespie, whose prejudice masks his own feelings of inadequacy. Each of these characters is forced to reexamine his values and to change some of his behavior when he is confronted by Virgil Tibbs, a skillful black detective.

## "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud": A Unit on Black Pride

### Concepts to Develop

1. Our ideas about what is beautiful are shaped by our culture.
2. Our culture has tended to ignore the beauty in blackness and has encouraged black people to feel that they can be beautiful only by imitating whites.
3. Black people, like all other people, have reason to be proud of their ancestry and of themselves.

### Resource Materials on Black Pride

Davis, Charles T., and Daniel Walden, eds. *On Being Black: Writings by Afro-Americans from Frederick Douglass to the Present.* Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett World Library, 1970.

Teague, Robert. *Letters to a Black Boy.* New York: Walker and Company, 1968.

### Audio-Visual Materials

*Aretha Franklin: Soul Singer* (24 min., McGraw-Hill)
*Black Pride* (30 min., Indiana University)
*Body and Soul* (2 parts, BFA Educational Media, 1968)
*Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (Guidance Associates, record and filmstrip)

### Introductory Lesson

Collect ahead of time pictures of beautiful women from other countries and from different periods of history, as well as pictures of beautiful contemporary women. Also collect magazine and newspaper articles about fashion designers' attempts to change styles—the examples of the mini and the midi would be useful.

Ask students to look at the pictures of the "beautiful" women and let them choose the ones they think are most beautiful. Then explain that at some time or place each of these women has been considered beautiful. Why do we not still appreciate all of them today? Have the class discuss to what extent their choice was dictated by current fashions. How many of the

pictures chosen were of contemporary American girls or of cultures whose styles are currently being imitated in our fashions? Then read the articles from the fashion magazines, pointing out that our own tastes have been influenced by these men who have simply put on a good publicity show.

Explain that "white" has always had a good press, has always had plenty of publicity about the virtues of whiteness. Have students study a thesaurus to discover how favorable most of the connotations of the word *white* are. Note also, however, any unfavorable associations with whiteness such a ghosts, leprosy, paleness.

Explain that only recently has black begun to enjoy a good press in America. Display and discuss "Black is Beautiful" posters and *Ebony* fashion stories and pictures of beautiful black women. Play recordings such as "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud" by James Brown and "To Be Young, Gifted and Black," the work of Lorraine Hansberry. Why is black pride important enough to write songs about? Read such poems as "Song of the Smoke" by W.E.B. DuBois and "Dream Variations" by Langston Hughes. Discuss the elements of beauty each of these writers sees.

After discussing modern attempts at encouraging black pride, remind students that blackness has not always had a bad press in history. Show students a picture of Queen Nefertiti and read from the "Song of Solomon" the passage beginning, "I am black, but comely" (I, 5).

**Books for Class Study**

*Tessie* by Jesse Jackson (Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1969).

A book for late elementary and early junior high school girls, *Tessie* is the story of a girl from Harlem who receives a scholarship to an expensive girls' school. The task of achieving acceptance from the white girls is difficult enough, but Tessie is also determined to keep her black friends and her own identity. While the plot of the book is a little contrived in places, the basic conflict is very real and quite sensitively developed.

*Discussion Questions*

1. What qualities did Tessie possess that she could be proud of? What special talents and abilities did she have? What qualities did Flo possess that made her a valuable friend?

2. Why was Tessie's mother opposed to her going to Hobbes? Was she being old-fashioned and unwilling to accept progress, or did she have other reasons? Why was she concerned about Tessie forgetting her color? Why was her color important? What and who else would she forget if she forgot her color?
3. What were the things that upset Tessie at Hobbes? What advice did Mrs. Blue give her? What advice would you have given her?
4. Why was Flo upset when Tessie wanted to shorten her skirt? Should Tessie have continued to dress like the girls in Harlem? Do you feel that she did desert her old friends, the Guardians?
5. What were the strengths of the Guardians? What is a "skin-friend"? Why did the girls become so upset when Tessie went on the snipe-hunt instead of to their activities? Did she make the right choice?
6. What were the traditions that the Hobbes girls were proud of? How did Irving feel about them? Were these things as important as the qualities of friendship that cemented the Guardians?
7. Why didn't Ethel want Tessie to take part in the play? Do you feel that Tessie was an "Uncle Tom" for taking part?
8. How did Tessie resolve her problems? Do you feel that she will really be able to live in both worlds successfully? Which world will she choose if she has to make a choice? Which world would you choose?

*Call Me Charley* by Jesse Jackson (Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1967).

This is a book for late elementary and early junior high boys. Charley moves into an all-white area and faces the problems of making friends without submitting to any of the indignities that the white boys and the white community try to force on him.

*Discussion Questions*

1. How did Tom's mother encourage him to be nice to Charley? Why was Tom so interested in Charley? Why did Tom decide to go with Charley on his route instead of with George?

2. How did Charley react to being called Sambo? How did he react when George thumped him on the head? How would you have reacted? How did he let the boys know that he was not going to take any foolishness?
3. How did the school discriminate against Charley? What would you have done about it if you had been Charley?
4. What was Charley's father's response when he found out that Charley and Tom won the contest? Why?
5. What happened to Charley's prize? Why didn't Charley protest? Why did Tom get mad at Charley? What did Tom's parents say about his attitude? Was he correct? Do black people need whites to stand up for them? Do white people think that black people need whites to stand up for them? Why did Charley begin to lose his fighting spirit?

*The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou* by Kristin Hunter. (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968).

A high school girl discovers a pathway to success amid the painful reality of discrimination in the ghetto. She also learns to understand and appreciate her heritage of black literature and music as she and her friend form a singing group. The shooting of one of her friends by the police causes her to lose all faith in American society for a while, but she is also quickly disillusioned by the extreme militants. Although an improbable resolution permits Louretta to become a successful singer, she also learns that money does not bring automatic happiness.

In terms of both literary qualities and student appeal, *The Soul Brothers and Sister Lou* is one of the finest junior novels available.

*Discussion Questions*

1. Why was Louretta reluctant to go home after school? Why did the kids need a place to gather? Why was William reluctant to let them use his printing press? Would you be willing to let them meet in your home? Why or why not?
2. Why was Louretta jealous of her sister? How did the family react to Arneatha's baby? How would you have reacted if Arneatha had been your sister? Do you think the family's reaction was helpful? Why was Louretta's mother so hard on William? Why didn't she want him to get a printing press or get married? Do you think she had a good reason?

3. Why did the kids all smile when they were told that the policeman is their friend? Do you believe that the policeman is your friend? Why or why not? What experiences with police have shaped your attitude? Why did most boys on the South Side have police records? How did Officer Lafferty harass them? Why did he arrest Calvin?
4. Why was Louretta afraid that the boys would not accept her? Did her color make any difference? What did Joella mean when she said, "You got a bad case of white fever"? What did she insinuate when she said, "Ask your momma"? How did her mother explain her color?
5. Why had Louretta's father left? Why did they consider being on welfare so bad? Do rich people believe that poor people enjoy being on welfare? Why hadn't her father come back after William got a job?
6. What was her mother's attitude toward trying to get ahead? Where did she get this attitude? Why did she feel that "Folks got to learn it's not good to think too big and want too much"? How did this attitude explain her interest in church? Have your parents encouraged you to dream about your future? Have their attitudes had any effect on your plans for the future?
7. What did Louretta learn from Blind Eddie? What is "Soul"? Play several soul records and discuss the qualities you find. Does soul music today have the same qualities the book describes it as having, or has it changed? If there is a student in the class who can play soul music, you might let him play a few selections and demonstrate some of the qualities of soul music. Why did Louretta and her group feel that soul is black people's music? Do you agree?
8. Why was Mr. Lucitano unable to understand their problems? Why was the offer to buy the instruments naive? Why was he able to get Calvin out of jail? Why did Mr. Lucitano want to help? Do you think it would have been possible for a white person to understand the group and be more useful to them than Mr. Lucitano was?
9. Why did Louretta believe in the gang? Why was she willing to turn down William's offer to send her to college? Do you think she was wise?
10. Why did the police interrupt the dance? Why was Jethro shot? Why didn't William turn in the weapons to the

police? Why had his attitude toward the "hoodlums" changed? What would you have done if you had been in William's place?

11. Why did Louretta's attitude toward school change? What were the lies they taught in school? Why did her mother say they told lies? Do you agree that the school was lying to her? Have you ever felt that you were being told lies in school? How do you think Lou should have reacted to the lies? What did it mean to become an "outsider"?
12. What does the word "cool" mean to you? Is your definition the same as Louretta's? How did Louretta show her "cool" at the hospital? Do you ever adopt a "cool" attitude? Under what circumstances?
13. What kind of funeral did Mrs. Jackson want? Why? What effect did it have on the people? Have you ever been to a funeral? If so, was this different? How was it the same?

**Other Books on Black Pride**

For supplemental reading in a unit on black pride, there are a number of junior biographies of famous black Americans which, though of limited literary value, do show the accomplishments of important blacks. Among those of particular interest are stories of sports heroes like Bill Russell's *Go Up for Glory* (Berkeley Medallion, 1966), the story of a famous basketball player; *Black is Best* by Jack Olsen (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), a biography of Muhammed Ali or Cassius Clay, and *I Always Wanted to be Somebody* by Althea Gibson (Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958), about a girl who overcame a number of obstacles to become a famous tennis player. Other inspiring books about famous blacks include *Yes, I Can* by Sammy Davis, Jr. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc., 1965), which tells of the entertainer's rise to stardom, and *Ralph Bunche: Fighter for Peace* by J. Alvin Kugelmass (Julian Messner, 1962), which tells of Bunche's boyhood and his work with the U.N. *The Adventures of Negro Cowboys* by Philip Durham and Everett L. Jones (Bantam Books, Inc., 1966) is a collection of exciting stories about black cowboys and badmen.

Dr. Martin Luther King is one of the most admired modern Americans among many segments of our society and some of the books by and about him could fit well into a unit on black pride. Lerone Bennett's *What Manner of Man: A Biography*

*of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* (Johnson Publishing Co., 1964) is the most thoughtful and thorough biography of him. *Marching to Freedom: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.,* edited by Robert M. Bleiweiss (Signet, 1968), is a less philosophical work. Coretta King's *My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1969) should also appeal to many students. King's own books *Stride toward Freedom* (Harper & Row, Publishers, 1958) and *Why We Can't Wait* (Signet, 1963) are interesting accounts of his early work in the civil rights struggle.

## "A Dream Deferred": A Unit on the Central City

### Concepts to Develop

1. Conditions in the ghetto require special adaptations for survival.
2. A number of factors—many of them the result of racism—make life in the ghetto extremely difficult.
3. Generally, Afro-Americans have been unable to obtain justice through the American judicial system.
4. Many people—both blacks and whites—often resort to socially disapproved methods of obtaining justice when other means are blocked.
5. When a person becomes extremely frustrated, he often acts emotionally and sometimes irrationally.
6. Discrimination has made it impossible for most blacks to achieve their dreams despite their ability, or it has caused them to fear to dream.

### Resource Materials on Problems in the Ghetto


Bennett, Lerone. *The Negro Mood.* Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1964.

Carmichael, Stokely, and Charles Hamilton. *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1968.

Clark, Kenneth. *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965.

Cohen, Jerry, and William S. Murphy. *Burn, Baby, Burn.* New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1965.

Hersey, John. *The Algiers Motel Incident.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1968.

*Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders.* New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1968.


### Audio-Visual Materials

*Black Power* (Reaction Films)

*Civil Rights Movement: Historical Roots, Mississippi Project, The North, Personal View, The South* (NBC-TV and En-

cyclopaedia Britannica Films)
*New Mood* (National Educational Television)
*Now is the Time* (Carousel Films)

**Introductory Lessons**

*Lesson I.* There are several simulation games which are very helpful to white students in helping them to experience the feelings of frustration and anger of ghetto dwellers. *Sunshine* (Education Products Divisions, The Head Box), *Ghetto* (Western Publishing Co.) and *Blacks and Whites* (*Psychology Today* Games) all attempt to simulate problems of the ghetto. While these games may be quite valuable to white students who have never experienced the kinds of frustration the games simulate, they are relatively useless with black students and may cause resentment, for they definitely oversimplify the problems.

Two other games, *The Cities Game* (*Psychology Today* Games) and *Starpower* (Simile II) simulate the conflicts between groups with power and groups that are discriminated against with no reference to race. These games may give interesting insights to both black and white students. If these or other simulation games are used, they should be followed by a discussion of the feelings of the players as they played their roles and an evaluation of the validity and accuracy of the game.

If you do not have a commercial simulation game, you can gain much the same effect by dividing the class into two groups for a contest of some sort, such as a spelling bee. While the contest is in progress, deliberately antagonize one side by obviously discriminating against those students, changing rules arbitrarily and unfairly interpreting the rules. Continue until they become as angry as you can tolerate. Then instruct the students to stand in a circle for discussion. Ask: Why did the losing side become angry? Where could they go for justice? Would the principal be likely to accept their word against a teacher's? Did the anger serve any purpose? What might have happened if the losers had accepted the situation with no protest? If people became so angry when a simple game is rigged against them, how might they react if the whole country were rigged against them?

*Lesson II.* For high school classes, obtain copies of the Kerner

Commission Report on Urban Unrest (The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) and discuss with the class the findings of the Commission and its conclusions. Discuss the evidence the Commission found that almost every aspect of life in the United States is rigged against the black person. Discuss the recommendations of the Commission. Why have they not been put into effect?

*Lesson III.* Have students look up in statistics books income information about both whites and blacks. (Such statistics are available in various publications of the U.S. Government Printing Office.) How do they compare? Have students do research on their own community. What percentage of your town is black? What percentage of very good jobs in the main stores in your town are held by blacks? Ask your parents if they can remember when the first black person got a job in a store in your town. What percentage of the desk jobs in the important industries in the community are held by blacks? Try to find out when these industries first hired blacks as laborers and in capacities other than as laborers. Is there any evidence that any stores or industries still won't hire blacks for important jobs? How many teachers in your school are black? Do black teachers have trouble getting jobs in your community? Do black teachers ever become principals in your school district? What is the percentage of black people on the school board? On the city council?

*Lesson IV.* Investigate your town for riot potential. Where do most blacks (or other minority groups) live? If there is a local Freedom of Residence group or other civil rights group concerned about housing, ask someone to speak to the class about housing patterns in your community. Look for other subtle kinds of discrimination in your city. How do the newspapers report incidents involving blacks. Do they handle them any differently than incidents involving whites or interracial incidents? Are the police impartial in their treatment of everyone? Look through the back issues of your city paper for murder or assault cases against both blacks and whites. Do crimes against both groups receive equal space? Are the criminals caught as quickly? Are sentences handed down equally for crimes of equal seriousness, regardless of the offender's race?

**Books for Class Study**

*Hog Butcher* by Ronald Fair (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1966).

A ten-year-old black boy witnesses the killing of a teen-aged black basketball star by police. The two policemen involved in the shooting at first maintain that the dead youth had committed a robbery, and both the police and the community put pressure on the child not to testify that he had been with Cornbread at the time the robbery was committed. However, the boy maintains his integrity, and eventually one of the policemen admits that the killing may have been a mistake.

*Hog Butcher* clearly explains the reasons for the hostility of black neighborhoods against the police. However, it also shows that police officers are also men who must struggle with their own consciences.

*Discussion Questions*

1. Why do the black youths admire Cornbread? What were the circumstances under which Cornbread was shot? How did the people react? Why didn't the boys admit that they were witnesses?
2. Were the blacks likely to get a fair hearing from the coroner? How was the coroner's office rigged? What do the police think about Cornbread and other black people? Would the police have acted differently if Cornbread had been white? If possible, visit several trials in your community and see if there is any difference in the treatment accorded blacks and whites.
3. What is the main idea of the first chapter in Part II? How were the two waves of immigrants different? What did the second wave contribute to the city? What did the first wave contribute?
4. What kind of ideals had Larry Atkins started with? What two things had destroyed his ideals? Why did he now simply want to escape being a black?
5. How did John feel about blacks? Why did he remember the incident with the girl in high school? What was the underlying reason why John and his wife fought? What new understandings of the neighborhood did John get when he went down without his uniform? What did he understand that the projects would be? Does the writer

describe John sympathetically?
6. Why did Earl's father tell him not to say anything? How did they try to stop Wilford from testifying? How had Officer Kelley tried to intimidate him?
7. What does the author mean by describing Chicago as a "welfare city"? What reasons can you discover for why Chicago is a "welfare city"?
8. Why did the people believe that Mr. Jenkins didn't testify? How did the police threaten him? Do you believe that this could actually happen?
9. Why did Wilford's mother begin to feel that there might be hope of getting his father out of jail?
10. Why did Larry change his testimony? Did he do the right thing?
11. Does the language seem real? natural? different from yours?
12. Is the story well told? How does Fair develop and maintain suspense?

*Whose Town?* by Lorenz Graham (Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1969).

This book follows *South Town* and *North Town* in telling the story of the Williams family. David Williams, a black high school senior, begins to wonder if blacks can receive justice in the United States after one of his friends is shot by a white man who pleads self-defense. A later killing of a black child leads to a riot, and David must choose between the teachings of his minister and those of a black nationalist leader. This is a good book on black militancy for junior high school students.

*Discussion Questions*

1. What were some of the conditions in North Town that disturbed the blacks? Where did most of the blacks live? How free were they to live in other parts of town? What kinds of job problems did they have? What were some of the things white people in the town said and did that angered them? Why did white people do such things?
2. Why was David accused of assault instead of the other boys? Why didn't David file a complaint first? How did the newspaper get the wrong story? How were they able to make the larceny charge sound so plausible? Do you think the coroner's inquisition was fair, given the evidence they had? Was

there any other evidence David could have given to support his case?

3. What did Lonnie mean by the phrase, "It's a white man's town"? What were the incidents that supported Lonnie's contention? If North Town is a "white man's town," what behavior does that suggest for blacks? Is America a "white man's country"? Is it possible for Afro-Americans to share in the wealth of this country equally? to be protected equally? to develop fully? If not, what can they do?
4. Compare the philosophies of Rev. Moshombo and Rev. Hayes. How does Rev. Hayes' philosophy lose effectiveness if blacks cannot be accepted as a part of America? Play recordings of speeches by Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King and discuss the differences. Arrange a debate between students on revolution vs. militant non-violence.

*Durango Street* by Frank Bonham (E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1965).

Rufus has just returned from reform school and finds that it is very difficult to survive in the projects without joining a gang. For grades seven through ten, *Durango Street* demonstrates well the reasons why a boy would join a gang and could be led into illegal activities. A street worker tries to help the gang find new activities, but the book does not offer easy solutions.

*Discussion Questions*

1. Why did Rufus join the gang? What needs did it fill? What were the dangers of trying to live without the gang? Can you think of any way he could have avoided trouble with the gang? What would you have done in his place?
2. How did Rufus respond to Mr. Rubio? What annoyed him about the social worker? Why did he like Mr. Travers?
3. What was Rufus' relationship with his mother like? Why did he feel she didn't love him? Was he right? Do you know anyone who feels about his mother the way that Rufus does?
4. Why was he so interested in Big Ernie Brown? Why did he want a father so badly? Why did his mother tell him that Ernie Brown was his father? Do you think she was wise to do this?
5. How did Rufus get into the Moors? What was his initiation?

Would you have gone through it?

6. How did Ed Travers make his last attempts to save Rufus? What were Robbins' plans for the Moors? What did he say was the reason boys joined a gang? Why did Robbins want to organize the mothers? Why wasn't Rufus' mother interested? Would you have joined if you had been Rufus' mother?
7. How did Rufus feel when Simon showed Ernie Brown his scrapbook? Why did he feel that the gang was breaking up? Why did Rufus decide to have a dance? What do you think will happen to him after the end of the book?

*The Nitty Gritty* by Frank Bonham (E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1968).

A book for younger children (grades five through eight), *The Nitty Gritty* is about the problems of living in the ghetto. Charlie's parents want him to stay out of school and work because they feel that an education is unimportant for a black boy. Students who read this book can come to see the effects of hopelessness and destroyed dreams on a family.

*Discussion Questions*

1. One of the first themes that the book introduces is the sense of hopelessness which poverty and discrimination cause. Questions like the following will help students understand these feelings: What kinds of jobs do Charlie's father and mother have? Do they like their jobs? Why don't they get better jobs? Why does Charlie's father drink so much? Do you think he would drink all the time if he could get a job he was happier with? How do you feel when you have to work for a long time on a task which you dislike?
2. Why did Charlie's father get mad when the teacher said Charlie could go to college? Why didn't he want Charlie to go to school? What did he say happened to Negro men who went to college? Would you go to college if you knew that, no matter how much education you got, you would never have a job requiring more than a high school education?
3. Why was Charlie unhappy staying with his own parents? What were the things he didn't like about his parents? Do Charlie's parents seem unusual? Do you know parents who oppose their children's dreams? Why do they?

4. Why did Charlie like Uncle Baron? What characteristics of Uncle Baron did he like? Why was he disillusioned with Uncle Baron? How did Mr. Toia explain why Uncle Baron left him? Do you believe this explanation? How were Uncle Baron and Charlie's father similar?
5. Why did Charlie like Mr. Toia? Do you think Mr. Toia meddled too much in Charlie's business? Was Mr. Toia right in helping Charlie play hookey? Do you think that Mr. Toia was unrealistic? Do you think he will be able to get Charlie a scholarship, or will he disappoint him as Uncle Baron did?
6. Locate all the times in the book when Charlie daydreams. What are the things he daydreams about? What do his daydreams show about the things he wants in real life? What things do you daydream about? Do you think you will ever get them?
7. What are some examples of times that Charlie refused to face up to reality? Why didn't he like the ending of "A Raisin in the Sun"? Why did he call Uncle Baron's talk about problems in Georgia "dull grown-ups talk"?

**Other Books on Problems in the Ghetto**

*The Contender* by Robert Lipsyte (Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967).

This is an exciting story for boys in grades eight through twelve. Alfred feels that he cannot succeed in school or in the white man's society. However, he does not want to go along with the other boys in his neighborhood in stealing. Finally, he discovers in boxing a way of developing himself without feeling that he is being exploited by the whites.

Alfred's struggles make the problems of the despair and hopelessness many black youths feel quite understandable.

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X* by Malcolm X and Alex Haley (Grove Press, Inc., 1966).

Although it is one of the finest recent books on the emotions and attitudes of militancy, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is probably too difficult and too harsh for most younger junior high students. Malcolm X tells honestly and clearly about the stages of his development from attempting to imitate the values of white society, to using crime to get ahead, to learning to hate

all whites because of his belief that their racism cannot be changed, to perceiving that some whites are not racist and may assist in the continuing fight against injustice. This is one of the most powerful books of our generation, and students should be encouraged to read it when they are mature enough.

## Literary Analysis of Literature by Afro-Americans for Senior High School Students

High school juniors and seniors are very interested in the artistic qualities of literature when they are given the opportunity of studying works appropriate to their level with a teacher who appreciates their imaginative attempts to develop their own interpretations. Adolescents, far more than most adults, appreciate the beauty of rhythm and words and the mysterious excitement of using and discovering symbols.

Unfortunately, too many teachers try to teach a graduate course in the American novel, spending weeks analyzing in depth *Invisible Man* or *Moby Dick,* when half of their class may be only beginning to venture into the adult section of the library. Students who are delighted to discover the clever ways that Langston Hughes puts words together will sit in rebellious boredom while the teacher tries to explain the allusions in Tolson's "Harlem Gallery." High school students like, and need, to study what they can understand and interpret themselves with the guidance of the teacher. Literature that they cannot appreciate on their own and analyze themselves with the assistance of their teacher should be saved for college. A student who is faced with too difficult material too early may feel that literary analysis is a bunch of tricks pulled on him by the teacher, instead of a way of understanding books and people better. Unless this attitude is changed by a later teacher, he may never properly appreciate the value of literary study and may become an anti-intellectual who regards any academic work with suspicion.

It is important, then, that the teacher of high school students choose works that they can understand, and that he respect their sometimes bumbling attempts to understand them. As teachers of higher mathematics have long understood, it may be far more valuable for a student to come up with the wrong answer by the right method than to reach the right answer by guessing or by following an incorrect process. In the same way, the teacher of literature should be more concerned with de-

veloping an honest inquisitiveness than with teaching the right answers. Even though he may not be able to accept a particular interpretation a student gives, he should praise the student if he has made an honest attempt and has used intelligent techniques in arriving at his answer.

Fortunately, there are a number of excellent novels by black writers which are of quite high literary quality and can easily be understood and appreciated by most adolescents. *Hog Butcher,* though discussed in the unit for junior high students, is highly appropriate for mature high school students. It deals with significant, controversial topics that are of very much concern to high school students today, particularly the problem of how the individual should behave in a society that he feels is corrupt. The conflict seems to center around a young boy who witnessed the killing of an older boy by the police and the pressures from various sectors of the community to keep him from testifying against the police. However, an equally important struggle is going on in the minds of the two policemen who are forced to face the realization that they may have made a very bad mistake and must also decide whether it is more important to clear the dead boy's name or to keep their own jobs. By analyzing the skillful use of point of view in this novel, students will realize that literary techniques such as this are not just academic tricks but are significant ways of helping people to understand each other.

Another book that is excellent for use with high school students is *God Bless the Child* by Kristin Hunter (Bantam, 1970). Like many contemporary novels, *God Bless the Child* deals with a girl growing up in the slums, but this book gives far more insight than most into the people and social conditions that affect the development of the girl's personality. An excellent study in character development and in the theme of illusion and reality, *God Bless the Child* is the kind of book that lures students into doing their own literary analysis simply to answer the questions the book naturally raises in their minds.

William Melvin Kelley's *A Different Drummer* (Doubleday, 1969) is an ideal book for members of the "Age of Aquarius" who have filled their minds with the mythical, mystical allusions of hard rock. The story of a black community that simply picks up and leaves the white people who continue to oppress them, the book is filled with such mystical sensations as the idea that

prompts Tucker Caliban to move his community. But there is also very insightful analysis of the relationships of black and white characters and the ideas and feelings of both.

*Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe is also discussed in the section for junior high and also appeals to the current interest in the occult. But it, too, has far more enduring literary appeal. Because it is a tragedy in the classical sense, students may enjoy comparing it to other tragedies they have studied and noting the way African beliefs, such as the concept of the "chi," influence the development of the tragedy.

*Brown Girl, Brownstones* by Paule Marshall (Random House, 1959) is one of the best books to use with high school students for helping them to understand the elements of the novel. The setting, plot, character development, and point of view are all important in understanding the novel, and students can be guided to recognize that just as each of these elements is important in understanding Selina, so their own environment, personal history, development, and perspective are important in understanding themselves. The problems Selina faces are similar to those most adolescents must solve: reaching a proper degree of acceptance of and independence from her parents, reaching sexual maturity, making a vocational choice, and finding the proper attitude toward her heritage.

One of the central conflicts of the book is the generation gap. However, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* treats the generation gap more maturely than most other books that deal with this theme, for it shows that not only is there a conflict between Selina and her parents, but there is as serious a conflict between her mother and her father which she must learn to accept. The younger generation is also divided, for Selina and her sister Ina both have very different attitudes toward their parents' conflicts.

The conflict between the two parents will probably be one of the first things that students will want to discuss. They should study both parents and try to understand the reasons for their seemingly immature and cruel behavior. Deighton Boyce, Selina's father, is trapped between his talents and a society that will not let him use them. As a boy he studied hard until he graduated and was turned down by every white store on the island of Barbados. As an adult, he has refused to accept defeat or a menial position. As soon as he fails in one area, he immediately begins studying something else, from accounting

to the trumpet to religion. He has refused to bow to discrimination, but he has not developed a successful way of fighting it.

Selina's mother, on the other hand, has learned how to get ahead despite discrimination, and she is willing to pay the price in self-respect and humanity which society demands of her. Born on Barbados in abject poverty, Silla worked for long hours in the fields as a child. Now she works in a factory and saves every cent to buy the property that she thinks will rescue her from poverty. Like other West Indian women in New York, she sees the way to economic security in buying brownstone houses to divide up and rent.

Students will find a lot to talk and think about in this conflict between Deighton and Silla. How do both of these positions enable them to survive in a hostile environment? To what extent can the environment be blamed for their problems? To what extent are their problems the result of their own weaknesses? What attempts do they make to get back together? Why do they fail? Why did they marry in the first place when their values are so different? Why are people quite often attracted to people with different values? Students may want to talk about—and they will certainly think about—the differences in values between their own parents. What circumstances, such as World War II, strongly influenced the values their parents hold?

The effect of the conflict between her parents on Selina is profound. At first she is very sympathetic to her father and views her mother as the enemy. As time goes on, however, Selina must recognize the weakness of her father and finally has to accept the fact that her mother has completely destroyed him. The climax in her feelings comes when her mother informs the police that Deighton has entered the country illegally and he is deported. Selina attacks her mother, crying "Hitler, Hitler."

However, Selina cannot reject her mother. Throughout the book others keep telling her that she favors her mother, that she looks and acts like her. And in a moment of horror near the end of the book, Selina realizes that she is planning to betray her mother just as her mother betrayed her father. Encourage students to analyze both Selina's and Ina's relationships with their parents. Discuss the ways in which each of the girls is like each of their parents. Discuss the ways that they show their feelings for the two parents and help students to see that Selina's

anger against her mother and Ina's betrayal of her father are both partly hunger for the affection that they feel is missing.

The effects of her parents' actions are by far the most obvious influences on Selina's growth, but perceptive students will soon recognize that her environment also has a very important role. Then students are ready to consider the importance of the setting in the novel. The teacher may begin with the title and the first two pages of the novel. The title, *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* obviously shows that there is a close relationship between Selina and the area of Brooklyn that she lives in.

The first page describes the houses as "an army massed at attention," one uniform red-brown stone. Though attempts were made to individualize the houses, "they all shared the same brown monotony. All seemed doomed by the confusion in their design." Like the houses, Selina sees the Barbadians sharing the same monotony and is determined to find an identity that will make her truly an individual, not just a variation on the same design.

After pointing out the relationship between Selina and the brownstones described on the first page, the teacher might ask students to find other sections in the book where the environment is shown to be closely related to the people. They may discover the lingering legacy of the whites which Selina dreams about as she sits in the old halls and as she visits Miss Mary, the ancient former servant of the former owner. Some may feel that, with their houses, the whites left a legacy of mercenary attitudes which influence Silla and the other West Indian women.

Later in the book, students will begin to discover the influence of the larger white society on Selina. The discrimination Selina and her family face is not the open cruelty described in books like *Black Boy* by Richard Wright. There is no danger of lynching or physical harm for the Boyce family, but the psychological damage of the too sweet smiles echoes in the mother's anguished cry, "Girl, do you know what it is out there? How those white people does do yuh?"

The crisis in Selina's growth to maturity comes when she confronts how "those white people does do yuh." One of her white friends' mother shows the deep cruelty that destroys all of her selfhood and makes her only a brown girl, as unindividualized as a brownstone. She sees her black face "confused in

their minds with what they feared most; with the night, symbol of their ancient fears, which seethed with sin and harbored violence." But in that encounter she also sees her own dark depth, the betrayal she has planned of her mother and her people.

Students will need to explore this encounter extensively. Exactly what is it in the white woman's conversation that is so upsetting to Selina? Why does she identify her dark color with sin and violence? Is the identification merely a semantic one—our language's identification of darkness and evil? Does she feel that her race is bad? If so, why does she decide to go to the islands? Why, also, does her encounter with the darkness lead to her fleeing from evil—deciding not to run away with the money? What understanding of herself and her people does Selina reach in this scene?

At the end of the book, Selina leaves the brownstones to seek her heritage in the islands, but she leaves behind her, as a symbol of her union with the brownstones, the silver bangles that unite her with the islands. No one can miss the symbolism of the final lines:

> The project receded and she was again the sole survivor amid the wreckage. And suddenly she turned away, unable to look any longer. For it was like seeing the bodies of all the people she had ever known broken, all the familiar voices that had ever sounded in those high-ceilinged rooms shattered—and the pieces piled into this giant cairn of stone and silence. She wanted, suddenly, to leave something with them. . . . Then she remembered the two silver bangles she had always worn. She pushed up her coat sleeve and stretched one until it passed over her wrist, and without turning, hurled it high over her shoulder. The bangle rose behind her, a bit of silver against the moon, then curved swiftly downward and struck a stone. A frail sound in that utter silence.[1]

The symbolism of the bangles is obvious, and is a good example to use to explain symbolism, or to remind students of the meaning of symbolism. However, there are other symbols in the passage which students can find themselves. There are the new projects that stand like monoliths. There are the old brownstones that have been destroyed to make way for them.

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[1] Paule Marshall, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1959), p. 310. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

There are the sounds—the song that Selina follows, the remembered voices, and the shattering bangle. From this passage, students can be encouraged to remember other symbols, the sound images, Ina's piano, with which she tries to drown out the yelling voices, and Deighton's trumpet, which he hopes will bring him success and which Silla destroys. There is also Miss Thompson's life sore, the symbol of the destructive oppression which festers within the black people.

By the end of the book Selina sees much further and much more clearly than she does as a child. The book ends with her looking over the whole city. It begins with her sitting inside her own house. At the end she can understand her mother, her father, her sister Ina, and the Barbadian Association. At the beginning she was puzzled by her own maturing body. Students can be guided to see that Selina becomes more mature as she is able to see more and more of other people's points of view. Chapter 2 of Book I is an interesting experience in point of view. This chapter, which introduces the other tenants of the house, contains a short description of each character by Silla, and a long description by the narrator. Silla's viewpoint is expressed forcefully throughout the novel in her conversations with her friends and with the family. Students may observe that while the narrator seemed to follow Selina's thoughts, the narrator shows understanding of Silla long before Selina does.

The function of the minor characters in the novel also makes an interesting study. The three other tenants, Suggie the prostitute, Miss Thompson, the motherly woman with the life-sore, and Miss Mary, the dying white woman—all represent parts of herself that Selina is struggling to understand: Suggie, her developing sexuality; Miss Thompson, her racial heritage; and Miss Mary, her national heritage in the white man's city. Later, Clive, her boyfriend, represents the futile rebellion which she is tempted to follow.

To conclude their study of *Brown Girl, Brownstones,* students may wish to make a critical evaluation of it. Beginning with questions like, "Did you enjoy the book?" and "Was it interesting?" a teacher may lead students to more intellectual considerations like "Was it realistic?" and "How well unified was the book?" Depending on their amount of experience with novel study, they may wish to evaluate the novel on other criteria as well.

Most high school students enjoy poetry more than they will admit in the typical English class. Improvisation, oral interpretation and choral reading are excellent ways of letting high school students have fun with poetry while learning the rudiments of poetic analysis. Preparing such a poem as Margaret Walker's "Harriet Tubman," James Weldon Johnson's "The Prodigal Son," or Sterling Brown's "Old Lem" vividly demonstrates the function of the narrator of a poem and the effects of different rhythm and rhyme patterns. A second step in a poetry unit might be to require each student to select a short, dramatic poem and to read the poem while pretending to be the narrator. Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks have a number of poems that are ideal for this assignment. If several students choose the same poem, conflicting interpretations are sure to arise, and students should be encouraged to use the text to defend their interpretations.

After this type of introduction, students may be ready to tackle a more difficult poem such as Gwendolyn Brooks' "The Chicago Defender Sends a Man to Little Rock." This is an excellent poem for high school students because it deals so powerfully with the problem of violence that troubles all of our society today. It is also a difficult poem, but one that can be interpreted by students with only a little guidance from their teacher.

Students may need some background about the events of Little Rock before they are able to understand the poem. If possible, show samples of magazine articles and newspaper stories from that period. If not, you might like to use excerpts from *The Long Shadow of Little Rock* by Daisy Bates (McKay, 1962), or "The Cheerleaders" from John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley* (Viking, 1969).

The first thing students might consider in looking at the poem is who the narrator is. He is a reporter from the Chicago *Defender,* an Afro-American daily. He has been sent to Little Rock to write a story about the efforts of the black children to enter schools and the efforts of the white community to prevent their entrance. But what kind of person is he? He is obviously quite observant. And he is an honest man. Although he had a lot of preconceived ideas about Little Rock, he is honest enough to recognize that they are not true. "The saga I was sent for is not down." The irony between his expectations and the

situation he finds is the problem of the poem.

Discuss with students for a while what he expected to find. What kind of people would you expect to riot, to close schools and to shout obscenities at school children? If you can obtain pictures of the Little Rock crowds, discuss what these people are probably like.

Next, discuss what the narrator finds in Little Rock. Look at the images the poet has chosen—very prosaic everyday things like combing hair and watering multiferns. Ask students what kinds of people these activities remind them of. Ask them to name people of their acquaintance that do the things named in the first few stanzas. How do they feel about these people?

Is there any indication in the early part of the poem that there is anything wrong in the lives it is describing? Some students may point out lines like, "Time upholds or overturns/the many, tight, and small concerns." Some may feel that the lives seem to be petty and restricted. Others may point out that the unusually strong rhythm and rhyme—almost perfect iambic tetrameter with three lines rhyming—also gives a sense of perhaps too much control, too much tightness.

With the seventh stanza, point out how the rhythm changes abruptly, though rather subtly. Students may feel that this section describes a different part of the community—or the freedom that summer brings. Help them to notice the contrasts here between the baseball and barcarolle, the policeman and open air concerts. Encourage them to picture the scenes sketched here and discuss what these scenes add to their feelings about the people of the town.

Discuss then the stanza on love in Little Rock. Point out, perhaps by reading it aloud, how even the sounds are more gentle and sympathetic in this stanza. How does the color imagery—"Awaiting one's pleasure/In azure/Glory with anguished rose at the root. . . ."—describe the problems of love? What does the blue symbolize? What does the rose stand for? Ask students what ideas or feelings about love these images remind them of. Encourage students to respond personally, to bring their own experiences to the poem.

In the next stanza ask students again to bring their own experiences to the images. Ask them in their own terms to explain the meaning of the lines, "It is our business to be bothered, is our business/To cherish bores or boredom." Let

them discuss their feelings about this kind of a life. Does it seem to be a violent life?

At this point the narrator enters the poem. What is his reaction to what he has found in Little Rock? How does his reaction to the people compare to yours? What is the puzzle he faces? Why is he shocked to find that these people are like people everywhere? Are they? Why doesn't he dare send this news to the editor? What effect would the news that the rioters in Little Rock are just like everyone else have on the readers of the newspaper?

Only at the end does the narrator finally speak of the "news" that is happening in Little Rock. Ask students to visualize each of the images and discuss what they feel from them. Why is there all the religious imagery? Who are the bright madonnas? Why does he say, "The loveliest lynchee was our Lord." In what sense was Christ lynched at Little Rock?

What is the story of Little Rock? You might assign students to write the article that they think the narrator sent back to his editor—or you might have students role-play his conversation with the editor. How would you reply to the editor's "hundred harryings of why"? Is the poem saying that all people are violent? Or is the violence only a part of some people? Is there any way suggested by the poem of making people less violent, or does the poem suggest that violence is an irradicable part of human nature? Do you agree?

Students might evaluate the poem by considering such questions as these: Why did the poet choose this particular narrator? Was the choice effective? Why does she alternate between definite rhythm and rhyme patterns and free verse? Does this alternation add to the poem or detract from it? Do the images convey clear pictures, or are they too confusing? Do you feel that the poem is a satisfactory unit, or is it too fragmented?

The essay is a particularly important genre for study that is frequently overlooked. Even a cursory glance through both popular and literary magazines will demonstrate that the essay, not the short story, is the genre of our times. However, most high school teachers and students still regard the essay as dull and irrelevant. This is partly because essays tend to be more topical in nature than most other genre, and the old classics anthologized in most textbooks are no longer of much interest to students.

However, contemporary black essayists like James Baldwin, LeRoi Jones, and Eldridge Cleaver cannot fail to have a powerful effect on their readers. Many of the essays in Baldwin's two collections, *Nobody Knows My Name* and *Notes of a Native Son,* which probe deeply into many aspects of discrimination and self-understanding, are particularly useful in high school. In Eldridge Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* (Dell, 1970), two essays in particular appeal to high school students, "On Becoming" and "The White Race and Its Heroes."

Baldwin's "Notes of a Native Son" is a powerful essay dealing both with the devastating effects of discrimination and the problems of attaining maturity by reconciling the disparate elements of one's past. An intensely emotional piece of writing, "Notes of a Native Son" begins with the death of Baldwin's father and a race riot in Harlem. The intense depth with which Baldwin probes his relationship with his father should be helpful to adolescents who are also probably attempting to define their attitude toward their parents. The essay raises a number of questions: Why was Baldwin never able to communicate with his father? What was the one time they did speak together seriously? Why didn't he follow up on this conversation? Why did he later wish that he had spoken more to his father? What did he think he could have learned from him? What conversation patterns often make it difficult for young people to really communicate with their parents?

The power of Baldwin's essay is a combination of the intensity of his message and his consummate mastery of the art of writing. The point of view in Baldwin's essays is more than first person. It is an intimate, revealing, psychological probing that breaks the bounds of the individual personality to become omnipotent. While speaking of himself and his own experiences, Baldwin is actually speaking of the deep, searching self in all of us. Students who have been taught to write only objective third person compositions may feel that Baldwin's writing is an entirely new genre, a new genre that makes writing a meaningful, compelling activity. For in Baldwin, one realizes that writing can be more than explanations or arguments; it can be in itself a vital struggle with existential questions, a therapeutic experience which can enable the writer to understand and control himself and his environment. Encourage students to talk about their reaction to the personal level of

Baldwin's writing. What do they feel is his purpose in writing? Could his purpose have been achieved by using third person? What would the essay lose if it were written in third person? Would it gain anything?

Throughout the essay, Baldwin's father's illness is a symbol of other problems. Paranoia is an extreme, unreasonable belief that a person is being persecuted. Discuss with students the effects of the illness on his father. What did it do to his relationships with his family, to his job, to himself?

But Baldwin's father is not the only person in the essay who is paranoid. When Baldwin himself went to New Jersey to work he found himself continually discriminated against, mistreated, and ridiculed. He himself began to develop a persecution complex and a deep inner rage. Discuss with students the differences and similarities between Baldwin's problem and his father's problem. Could Baldwin be called paranoid for feeling he was persecuted if he really was persecuted? Is it possible that Baldwin's father's disease developed in the same way? Was he also actually persecuted? Is there any evidence in the essay that he was?

Baldwin carried out the theme of paranoia even further by comparing his rage to the Harlem riots, and saying that every black man feels this same rage. Is it possible to say that all black men are victims of paranoia? Is it possible that constant discrimination could drive all black men to the limits of sanity? Or is it possible to be sane in an insane world? What is a sane reaction to the type of treatment Baldwin received in New Jersey?

If the cause of the rage Baldwin experiences is persecution by society, what is the cause of the madness which makes society persecute him? What is the reason for the white man's disease that make him create such an irrational society?

Baldwin's essay ends in a mature acceptance of both the world and his father and a determination to escape the madness from which each suffers. Baldwin's solution is a determination to recognize the world as it is and never to "accept these injustices as commonplace" but to "fight them with all one's strength." Does this solution seem satisfactory and possible? What other possible solutions are there to the problem? What solution is there to the white man's madness that causes this discrimination?

Major black writers can play an important role in the literature program by providing significant, contemporary, controversial literature that is both thought provoking and artistically valuable. A major goal of the literature program in high school should be to demonstrate that careful study of literature can lead students to better understanding of themselves and others and that literary techniques are not games played by critics and English teachers, but ways of communicating human truths effectively. Baldwin and other contemporary black writers, with their honesty and intensity, can take students on a long step toward intellectual curiosity and integrity.

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